

Looking for answers to marijuana cultivation questions

Publisher's note: *The author of this letter read part of it into the record at the Sept. 29, 2010, marijuana cultivation committee meeting in South Lake Tahoe. Below is the letter in its entirety.*

To the publisher,

At last week's committee meeting called to develop an ordinance for the home cultivation of medical marijuana, a homeowner on the committee spoke of her concern about the disposal of soil potentially contaminated with fertilizer, herbicides, pesticides and other grow products. There is also the problem of the washing and disposal of contaminated equipment used to apply these products. This possible introduction of toxins into neighborhoods and commercial grow warehouses will have to be squarely confronted and resolved. Some regulatory agencies and neighbors will demand it.

Grow advocates on the committee agreed that in order to dissipate marijuana fumes and reduce mold problems, fans would be required to circulate the air from the grow room (up to 10 percent of the floor area of a house) to outside fresh air every three minutes. Unlike fans made for home use, these may have to be of an industrial sort, and if so, are likely to make noise well above the peace and quiet that neighborhood residents presently enjoy. Fans will be programmed to switch on and off for as long as marijuana is growing in the houses. Will they be running 24 hours a day? Just one of these fans may announce to any passerby that they are close to a grow house and every neighbor will know where the grow houses are. Several of these fans placed in close proximity could

contribute a continuous noise to some significant part of the neighborhood.

If marijuana is grown in garages, flammable and toxic material such as gardening chemicals, anti-freeze, gas grills and other equipment that is now suitably stored in a garage will be displaced. While it may be legal to store such items in the home, is it the preferred location? Can the fire department recommend alternative storage spaces?

Since growing marijuana in neighborhoods will in part include a business transaction – the selling of the unused product to dispensaries – will water use be billed at the commercial or residential rate?

The City Council may impose a one-or two-year moratorium on new dispensaries. Nevertheless, the three existing storefront dispensaries are “grandfathered in”. Why? Isn’t it appropriate for there to be periodic reviews of the dispensaries by the public, City Council and staff? Shouldn’t their continued operation be provisional? Who made the decision that the three dispensaries are grandfathered in and why was public comment not sought beforehand?

Originally, this ordinance was to be presented to the City Council at its Oct. 5 meeting. That date has been changed to the Oct. 19 City Council meeting. Hopefully, the public will have a chance to comment.

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