

South Tahoe pot club moving half block to Hwy. 50 location

By Kathryn Reed

Gino DiMatteo thrust his arms in the air after the South Lake Tahoe City Council granted him permission to move his medical marijuana dispensary less than a block from where it is currently located.

The city's ordinance mandates the three collectives get the council's blessing before being able to move.

Had the council gone along with City Attorney Patrick Enright's recommendation to deny the move, it would have meant another 28 people being unemployed and the city not reaping its share of taxes. It also would have meant the number of pot clubs would have decreased by 33 percent.

City of Angels II's 2010 tax documents show it had gross receipts of \$463,028.

Enright made a lengthy presentation, going into a good deal of history about medical marijuana law, including court cases that are yet to be decided.

But the matter was about whether DiMatteo could move, not about the pros or cons of medical marijuana.



City of Angels II owner Gino DeMatteo is moving his business to this Highway 50 location. Photo/LTN

DiMatteo's landlord, Darcy DeTarr, had received a letter from the U.S. Attorney General's Office threatening to seize the property if pot continued to be sold on the premise. An agreement was reached between the landlord and tenant that he could keep the operation going until mid-July, but after that time he had to change what he was doing.

DiMatteo decided to forego the landlord-U.S. government headache and instead would shoulder the entire burden by owning the building he operated out of. He is in escrow on the old Lorraine Bakery building on Highway 50 that sits between Thran's and the Matterhorn motel.

He told the council no signs will say what the business is, patients will be directed to use the James Street driveway and that he won't be growing marijuana on the premise.

The council voted 4-1 to allow DiMatteo to move. Councilman Bruce Grego voted no. He has consistently been against the dispensaries.

In other action:

- Mike Keck asked the council to look into the parking issues involving some streets in the Heavenly area. The council agreed to look into it.
- Four people asked the council to make a decision on the loop road project and the potential use of eminent domain sooner rather than later. The council agreed to take up the matter in September.
- The council voted 3-2 (Claire Fortier and Angela Swanson were on the losing end of the vote) regarding the sign

ordinance and the appeals process.