

SLT eager to get pot grows into compliance



Special lights are required for marijuana plants to thrive in an indoor grow room. Photo/Steve Kubby

By Kathryn Reed

Plants are thriving even though it's winter in Lake Tahoe.

That's what happens when a garage is converted into a grow room.

Buds are sprouting from the 29 marijuana plants.

And this is all legal in South Lake Tahoe.

Ten permitted grows exist in the city. But what worries city officials is the hundreds of people who are illegally growing marijuana indoors. They pose a safety threat to themselves and their neighbors.

"With all the illegal grows I see there are a lot of hazards and it is a little spooky how close people are to burning the house down, or having damage with mold or water," Dave Walker, South Lake Tahoe building official, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "I would love to see more people get permitted to make sure

everybody is safe.”

Steve Kubby, who helped write Proposition 215 – the Compassionate Care Act, received his permit from the city last month.

“This was an amazingly effortless process for me,” Kubby told *Lake Tahoe News*. “The building department was so cooperative.”

Despite being legal, Kubby has reservations about having had to go through the process in the first place because the state law doesn’t say people need a municipality’s permission. Still, he said he complied to be a role model for others.

Kubby used Corey Barack, who is a plumber by trade, to ensure his place would meet all of the city’s rules and be as safe as possible. His business, Grow Safe, is a consulting firm for those seeking to grow marijuana legally in the city for medicinal reasons.

“The whole room is sealed,” Barack said as he gave a tour of Kubby’s room that is a walled-in section of the garage.

He hooked up a reservoir, which is really a sump pump, as a drip system. Kubby said the CO2 generator is like putting the plants on steroids.

“That generator increases the yield by about 30 percent,” Kubby said.

People may use 10 percent of their living area for a grow room, up to a maximum of 250-square-feet. Permits cost more than \$300 and are good for one year. A 215 card is required to get the city permit. There is no limit on the number of plants allowed.

Outside Kubby’s house there is no stench of marijuana. That is another requirement of the city’s – to make sure everything is ventilated correctly. Many older homes cannot handle the amount of electricity required to keep a grow room going. That

is why fire hazards are common. For Kubby, he changed his electric range and oven to gas to allow for more amps to be used for the grow room.

“We anticipated people might increase the grow area or add things that were not safe, but that has not been the case,” Walker said. “They have been very good about following the rules.”

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Notes:

- Building official Dave Walker and Police Chief Brian Uhler are giving a free informational talk Feb. 2 at 7pm at the Wellness Center in the Bijou Center in South Lake Tahoe. The purpose is to give information about the permit process for indoor grows and to answer questions.