

SLT stacks evidence against recreational pot

By Kathryn Reed

A one-sided presentation was delivered to the South Lake Tahoe City Council on Tuesday about how bad marijuana is, with most speakers advocating for the city to have as little to do with recreational aspects of the drug as possible.

What they said:

- Police Chief Brian Uhler: It will hurt the local tourism industry and not help the economy. He cited how the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority is promoting recreation of a different kind. However, the LTVA has not taken a position on recreational marijuana and no evidence was provided whether selling it in town would be economically good or bad. He wants the city to ban the sale of recreational marijuana.

- Barton pediatrician Rhonda Sneeringer: Presented statistics about how mothers who smoke during pregnancy and while breast feeding harm their children; worries about increased adolescent use. Believes in more education. Asked the council to not allow weed to be sold recreationally.

- Barton director of emergency services Lance Orr: Wants to ensure medicinal and recreational marijuana are separate conversations. Presented stats from Colorado, a state that has allowed recreational pot for two years. Traffic fatalities linked to pot use have increased and visits to the emergency room are greater.

- Hannah Greenstreet representing Lake Tahoe

Unified School District: Worries even more students will use, stating the numbers are already on the rise. At South Tahoe Middle School in 2015-16 24 students were caught with marijuana, while this school there have been 25 incidents; at South Tahoe High School the numbers are 30 for 2015-16 and 23 this school year. Edibles and vaping pens are rampant now. Doesn't want it sold here.

· Kelsey Magoon with Drug Free Coalition: Believes marijuana is addictive, that ads will be seen by youth, and that the potency is more harmful today than years' past. Against commercial sales in the city.

What the speakers shared was how bad marijuana is. But that isn't the point because California voters already said yes to recreational weed – and it will be legal Jan. 1. In 2018, storefronts will be allowed. All of the negatives can happen even if pot is not sold here.

The major components missing from the Dec. 13 talk were why selling it in South Lake Tahoe would be bad or good. But that didn't stop the council from agreeing to have the topic on a future agenda to take action. The electeds specifically asked for the language to be voted on to be what the police chief wants – to not allow the sale of recreational marijuana in the city limits.

California voters last month approved Proposition 64, the legalization of marijuana for recreational use. Statewide it passed with 57.1 percent of the vote. In El Dorado County the initiative barely failed with 50.07 percent saying no. However, 65.26 percent of the voters in South Lake Tahoe said yes to recreational marijuana. In district five of El Dorado County, which encompasses the entire South Shore west to parts of Pollock Pines, 62.4 percent approved the measure.

Some of those people might like a place to purchase the weed.

The initiative allows for cities and counties to decide if it would be sold in their jurisdictions. What they can't ban is the use (except in/at public facilities), growing of plants (though there are limits) or transportation (quantities are regulated).

So, even if South Lake Tahoe won't allow a business to sell pot, it can't stop people from lighting up.