

SLT recreational pot ordinance takes shape

By Kathryn Reed

Recreational marijuana is going to be for sale in South Lake Tahoe. When still remains to be seen, but most likely by summer.

The City Council made substantive progress March 27 in regards to this controversial topic that has languished for months.

Some of the major decisions the council agreed to include in the proposed ordinance:

- Up to three recreational marijuana shops.
- Development agreements would be allowed.
- The applicants will go through a merit based process, with preferential treatment to locals.
- Special use permits would be required.
- Background checks would be a necessity.
- Staff will look at the public safety and application procedures.
- No micro businesses will be allowed in the first year.
- There will be no limits on the various license types with exception to retail.
- Delivery services will be allowed.

What will come back is a draft ordinance, which should be at the April 17 regular City Council meeting. The public will still have time to sway the council at at least two public

hearings on that document.

The council members can also add, delete or amend what the city attorney brings forward. Sergio Rudin with Burke, Williams and Sorensen law firm handled the city attorney duties for the night.

Application procedures and minimum requirements for development agreements will be created by staff. These will likely be handled by a separate resolution and may not be ready in April.

Onsite consumption is one of the sticking points. The city attorney will bring the council more information. Tahoe Wellness Cooperative, the medicinal pot shop in town, has allowed onsite consumption since Day 1, so there is a precedent for this activity.

The special meeting started with a presentation from the planning department and then one from law enforcement. Acting City Manager Jeff Meston then wanted to go over seven pages of questions.

At that time Councilwoman Brooke Laine said it was more important to be answering questions the community cannabis working group came up with and flushing out concerns the council had. Meston's questions never got addressed, at least not how he intended.

Rudin confirmed the draft ordinance for adult use marijuana was 90 percent complete. This is because the council had previously agreed to adopt most of what the community working group had come up with.

Rudin then took over the meeting, getting the council to focus on the handful of issues he needed consensus on.