

Marijuana regulations update

April 19, 2021

10:03 a.m.

Present: Commissioner Stamper, Commissioner Pollock, Commissioner Swope, County Manager Erik Martin, Sheriff Rob Snaza, Lee Napier, Becky Butler, Eric Eisenberg, Steve Wohld, Kevin McDowell, Lara McRea, Tailor Albright

Guests: Claudia Yaw, Edna J. Fund, Susan DeLaire, Nic Scott, Frank Corbin

Recorder: Rieva Lester

Eric Eisenberg and Kevin McDowell discussed changes to Ordinance 1271 that would be needed to remove roadblocks to allow for marijuana sales locally.

Lee Napier said Building Code changes and land-use changes may be needed. She also discussed steps that would be required to apply for permits.

Commissioner Pollock discussed concerns regarding hydroponic-style farming versus greenhouse-style farming.

Eric said the county may have to go through the Planning Commission to change land-use concerns. He said changing only the business license and health requirements would be much faster. He said the county could then address the land-use issues later.

The group discussed Lewis County Code 17.42.

Commissioner Pollock said she'd rather see the county go through the Planning Commission first then later amend Ordinance 1271.

Sheriff Snaza said several individuals have received state approval for marijuana production. He asked if they would be allowed if Ordinance 1271 was amended. Kevin McDowell said he believed the individuals likely could apply for special-use permits. Sheriff Snaza said he has concerns about odors. He urged the commissioners to take the slower, more methodical approach, going through the Planning Commission before updating the regulations in Ordinance 1271.

Sheriff Snaza said the Sheriff's Office has seen many large illegal grow operations and that most are not hydroponic operations. He said he has some concerns about waste / bi-products from grow operations.

The group further discussed concerns regarding waste.

The commissioners said they would like to further look at land issues before looking at updates to Ordinance 1271.

Lee Napier said she'll provide a recap of what the Planning Commission looked at several years ago.

Sheriff Snaza recommended the commissioners reach out to the state Liquor and Cannabis Board for guidance. He stressed that he backs whatever the commissioners decide to do. However, he cautioned that updates will not prevent illegal grow operations from setting up shop in Lewis County.

Commissioner Stamper said it's not a cash cow for the county. He said there will be staffing and other code enforcement needs that will require funding, and he reminded the group that marijuana is still not allowable at the federal level.

Meeting ended at 10:47 a.m.