

Council approves marijuana cultivation facility

September 19, 2021



Indoor cannabis cultivation is officially legal in downtown Crescent City. The city council affirmed the right of Ocean Grown, LLC to exist on front Street on Tuesday.

The council upheld the planning commission's ruling in favor of the operation at the former Turf Club. The facility at 900 Front Street followed all conditions of the city's ordinance and could not be lawfully denied, according to planning consultant Garry Rees.

At issue: those who objected to the notion of a growing operation near Beach Street Park and Kids Town.

The resident who brought the appeal, Roger Gitlin, testified that "It's not appropriate for in town. This does not fit in the normal business of the area," he urged the business to "move out to the county and grow your marijuana."

Gitlin was joined by resident Natalie Fahning.

"Move it elsewhere. It doesn't need to be in the city. Please consider this an eyesore and a nuisance and we need not to have this in our downtown," she said.

However, Ocean Grown received support from an unusual corner. Police Chief Richard Griffin said he believes the facility will be a cause for fewer police calls than the abandoned bar which he claims attracts graffiti and petty crime.

“You have a business that’s going to be under scrutiny. I think the option of leaving it vacant is worse,” the chief said.

Mayor Jason Greenough said he saw no grounds to deny the permit.

“Do I support marijuana or use it personally? No. But if they’re following the law, I don’t see an avenue to deny the permit,” Greenough said.

Mayor Pro Tem Blake Inscore affirmed the process as well. He said the ordinance which allows the indoor cultivation plant was given a lot of thought and the applicant is compliant.

“This wasn’t a rubber stamp. It was over a two year span vetted in public meetings. No one said don’t do it. If people were against it, that’s when the discussion should have taken place,” he said.

Council member Ray Altman was more blunt. “Do you want boarded up buildings and a shit hole or do you want to support businesses? We’ll have a business instead of a boarded up building.”

In the end the council upheld the planning commission’s approval for Ocean Grown LLC to create an indoor cultivation business on Front Street. It will have to remove the front windows, keep the sign at the back of the building and control odor. It cannot have light spilling out to the surrounding area and must have security as spelled out by the ordinance. It also cannot sell its product commercially on site but will have it removed by a licensed distributor.

The plant will employ roughly six people including the owner.

The one dissenting vote came from Council Member Beau Smith who said he wasn’t on the council when the cannabis ordinance was passed and was “having a hard time with it.” Smith claims “a man ought to be able to do what he wants on his own property” but he didn’t believe the ordinance was a good idea. “I wouldn’t want my kid working there.”

In the end the motion for approval of the business was all in favor with Smith voting no. The business can go forward.