

Supervisors vote in favor of marijuana growing business

February 3, 2021



Del Norte County supervisors cleared the way for the first commercial marijuana growing operation in the county.

By a 4-0 vote, supervisors approved an appeal by Jeremy Rodriguez and Moving North LLC after the county's Planning Commission denied a request for a use permit for the operation.

Under county marijuana regulations, all growing operations must get a use permit by going through the Planning Commission. If the commission denies the permit, applicants can appeal to the board of supervisors.

County planner Taylor Carsley told supervisors the commission denied the permit during a December meeting, after which Rodriguez appealed.

On Tuesday, supervisors had a lot of questions, many related to whether or not a fence around the building should be required.

Supervisor Valerie Starkey asked whether requiring a fence might actually lead to more attention for the business.

Supervisor Gerry Hemmingsen agreed.

“I was concerned about the fence issue myself,” Hemmingsen said. “Is there something wrong with the security of the building. I don’t often think about having to secure a secure building. Why would we require fencing? It looks to me like there’s enough requirements on this permit already. I have a fence at my building, but it gets cut weekly, but we don’t have a problem with people getting into the building. I think the building itself would be fairly secure. I would think with this type of a business, you’re aware of security and are going to want to secure your product.”

Rodriguez agreed, but said he would take whatever steps the county felt was needed.

“I feel a new fence being built might just draw more eyes to it, but I will and can build a fence,”

Rodriguez said.

Rodriguez added that the building in Smith River is fairly secure, but he has plans to add security doors to add an extra layer.

The operation will be fully inside a 5,000-square-foot building, with sealed rooms and charcoal filters to prevent odor from escaping. Between two and five people will be employed year round, with additional hires during cultivation.

During public comment, nine letters in support of the business were read into the record and two other people spoke in favor. Many said virtually the same thing, pointing out the business has vowed to support schools and will bring in increased tax revenue.

“The people have voted. It is legal and should be treated as any other business without any other cannabis specific limitations or restrictions,” many of the letters read.

Board Chairman Chris Howard said the county regulation requires marijuana growing businesses to renew their use permits annually.

“We don’t know how this is going to unfold in our community,” Howard said. “That is why the board proceeded with caution, so we could see how the first business was going to operate in our community.”

After the discussion, supervisors voted 4-0 to approve the appeal and issue the permit.