

Planning & Building Services Staff

County of Mendocino

Main Office:

860 N. Bush St, Ukiah CA 95482

Phone: [\(707\) 234-6650](tel:(707)234-6650)

Coast Office:

120 W. Fir St, Fort Bragg CA 95437

Phone: [\(707\) 964-5379](tel:(707)964-5379)

Web: www.co.mendocino.ca.us/planning/

>>> Sheila Jenkins <glazegoddess@gmail.com> 5/5/2021 11:34 AM >>>

Planning & Building Services Staff

County of Mendocino

Main Office:

860 N. Bush St, Ukiah CA 95482

Phone: [\(707\) 234-6650](tel:(707)234-6650)

Coast Office:

120 W. Fir St, Fort Bragg CA 95437

Phone: [\(707\) 964-5379](tel:(707)964-5379)

Web: www.co.mendocino.ca.us/planning/

RECEIVED
MAY 05 2021
Planning & Building Services

>>> Sheila Jenkins <glazegoddess@gmail.com> 5/5/2021 11:31 AM >>>

Dear Commissioners,

I've watched Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission meetings on the Cannabis issue multiple times to try to understand what was presented but also to know what was NOT presented that should have been.

At the start of the March 19 Planning Commission meeting, it became obvious that a discussion about *whether* the county should adopt the proposed new ordinance was not to be allowed. Planning Staff immediately diverted the commissioners' attention to line items in the proposed ordinance.

A similar tactic unfolded during the special BOS meeting on April 12. CDFW gave an engaging and informative presentation during which they asserted that an EIR is critical to assessing the cumulative environmental impacts of the proposed ordinance. After the presentation, Supervisor Williams immediately diverted attention away from this point. In fact, the entire presentation, which should have formed the basis of our Cannabis ordinance, was largely ignored by the BOS.

At the April 27 BOS meeting, planning staff efficiently provided a map, upon request, that showed the Rangeland and Ag parcels that have access to municipal water. But the BOS never discussed whether those water districts have water to spare for this expansion, probably because most of those districts DO NOT have water to spare.

Then came the shocking testimony of Marlayna Bourbonnais Duley from the Department of Environmental Health, which has been issuing an unprecedented number of new well permits. She said no one knows how much water is in any of the water basins, aquifers, or watersheds in the inland region and that they have no baseline data or groundwater studies available. Nor do they have a hydrologist on staff anymore due to budget constraints.

When asked about the county's plan to deal with the inevitable conflicts between neighbors that will arise from this increased permitting of wells during ongoing drought, Ms. Duley explained that the complainant would need to monitor their well and provide evidence of a negative impact. But proving that it's your neighbor's well that is impacting your well (as opposed to the drought or the cumulative impacts of all of the other wells in a watershed) is a difficult, if not impossible, task. There have been only two successful cases litigated in the county to date. Both were brought by groups and not individuals, likely because of the great expense.

In effect, the county is issuing well permits and provisional cannabis permits with little insight and then largely ignoring the negative impacts, the legitimate complaints, and the expensive legal battles that ensue from their self-serving policies.

On April 27, it also came to light that only a few wildlife corridor studies have been done. But the BOS never discussed the need for an EIR, which would provide those studies and would help protect wildlife in this era of widespread extinctions and loss of biodiversity.

The other crucial bit of information the BOS should have discussed was how many acres of ag and rangeland parcels could potentially be converted to Cannabis with this expansion. Is it 1,000 acres, 10,000 acres, or what? Why wasn't a map of the potential qualifying parcels ever brought to the table, or even requested? Might it be because such a map might reveal disturbing facts about this expansion plan?

Only Supervisor Haschak showed concern about the lack of information and the scope of this plan, offering that it could be as many as 1,000 acres in the Round Valley alone could be impact. And as we all know, the Round Valley Water District is already reporting problems with both quantity and quality of water. And people are complaining that their wells are drying up.

At the heart of the unpopularity of this proposal is the fact that we all fear losing our water supply, which is - so essential to our survival. A discussion of the unpopularity problem was also largely off the table, which is forcing the community into a referendum and an expensive special election estimated to cost between two to three hundred thousand dollars. Ironically, this may cost us more than the much-needed EIR, a valuable document that could help us chart the correct course for the new climate regime and the difficult drought years ahead.

Supervisor Haschak pointed out that the Planning Commissioners' recommendations can only be as good as the information they have to work with. Whether the lack of information and time given to the Commissioners to study this issue is intentional, or not, I do have to question the sincerity of this board's desire to know the full scope of the potential impacts of their new ordinance.

They are rushing to adopt this ordinance before July 1 so they don't have to do an EIR. They voted for it 4 to 1 despite your recommendations. They aren't listening to you and they aren't listening to the public. The great outpouring of letters was submitted because the public knows this ordinance is a Trojan horse - a threat disguised as a gift.

We are thankful for your inquiring minds, your good judgment, and your sensible recommendations.

Appreciatively,
Sheila Jenkins
Willits