

Napa County and its Cities Discuss Coordinating Marijuana Policies.

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Napa County and its cities are learning together as they deal with a post-Proposition 64 California that has legalized recreational marijuana.

Representatives from county and city governments met Wednesday at Napa Valley College for what was billed as a “Napa Countywide Cannabis Roundtable.” They heard presentations and then had a discussion.

The outcome – they want to meet again and dive deeper into some aspects of Proposition 64, such as possible environmental effects from outdoor cultivation, possible tax revenues and youth marijuana education.

“This is like building the airplane as you’re learning to fly it,” American Canyon Mayor Leon Garcia said.

California is still working on legislation connected with Proposition 64. Meanwhile, the county and cities are working on their own laws, given the power they have over how some aspects of Proposition 64 will unfold locally.

County Supervisor Ryan Gregory a few months ago proposed having the cannabis roundtable with two representatives each from the county and its five cities. The agencies want to learn how to build and fly the plane together, even if their individual laws-to-be might differ.

Their guides on Wednesday were Paul Smith of the Rural County Representatives of California and Amy Jenkins of the lobbying group Platinum Advisors, where she represents both local governments and the cannabis industry.

State voters passed Proposition 64 in November 2016, 57 percent to 43 percent. The initiative allows people over age 21 to grow up to six marijuana plants indoors and to use recreational marijuana in their homes and at licensed marijuana businesses. It lays out guidelines for a recreational marijuana commercial industry.

Cities and counties have the power to decide whether to allow outdoor cultivation. They can allow or ban marijuana businesses, as well as tax recreational – but not medical—marijuana.

Marijuana remains illegal under federal laws, but the Obama administration maintained a hands-off approach if a local regulatory system was in place, Smith and Jenkins said. How the Trump administration might modify this approach in regard to recreational marijuana is an unknown.

Meanwhile, Gov. Jerry Brown has a proposed a trailer bill for the state budget that would merge regulations for recreational marijuana and medical marijuana, which has

been legal in California since 1996. The state is considering such issues as shipping, licensing, packaging and what potency caps might be in place.

“This is changing literally minute-by-minute,” Smith said.

Napa Mayor Jill Techel wondered if Proposition 64 will, indeed, be the tax Gold Rush for cities that some say they think it will be.

Jenkins had no definitive answer. She said Coachella approved a 111,000-square-foot cannabis production campus with the expectation that tax revenues will increase by 30 percent. Colusa could have a 10-acre cannabis production campus.

“It is difficult to estimate at this point what your revenue-generation ability is,” Jenkins said.

Techel and Garcia were interested in the group further discussing youth education programs on marijuana.

Calistoga Mayor Chris Canning said the county’s stance on commercial cannabis activity in rural areas could affect cities. A ban could shift pressure to land within cities that could otherwise be used for housing. He wants further discussion among the county and cities.

Yountville Mayor John Dunbar expressed concern that commercial, outdoor marijuana cultivation in rural areas could affect waterways. He wants more discussion on what environmental precautions might be taken locally.

“I don’t think it takes a large mega-grow for there to be an impact,” Dunbar said. “I think we’re all sensitive to what’s happening to the Napa River and the watershed.”

Supervisor Belia Ramos asked if Napa County and other counties would have marijuana appellations similar to wine appellations. Jenkins said the state is looking at the issue and related “truth-in-labeling” requirements.

Voters in Napa County favored Proposition 64 by 61 percent to 39 percent.

“We have the numbers on Proposition 64 that, I would say, requires us to not just be compliant, but be responsive to the desires of residents in a responsible manner,” Ramos said.

The county and cities are trying to have their marijuana laws in place by the end of the year.

Local resident and long-time medical marijuana advocate James Hinton told the roundtable representatives during public comment that they seem to be heading in a promising direction. He repeated his offer to arrange tours of cannabis dispensaries and cultivation

http://napavalleyregister.com/news/local/napa-county-and-its-cities-discuss-coordinating-marijuana-policies/article_b76444b0-a73d-5cd8-a4c5-5c7c10d8d77f.html