

Boulder County accepting advance sign-ups to speak at Niwot pot-shop hearing

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If you go

What: Boulder County commissioners' public hearing to get comments about a retail marijuana establishment proposed for 6924 N. 79th St., Niwot

When: 2 p.m. June 29. Public testimony is expected to begin around 3 p.m., after presentations from the county staff and the property owner.

Where: Third-floor hearing room of the Boulder County Courthouse, 1325 Pearl St., Boulder

Signing up to speak: People interested in speaking at the hearing can sign up in advance through a link on the Boulder County Land Use Department's "Niwot Marijuana Special Use Review" website, bit.ly/24i8aID

Written comments: People can email written comments in advance of the hearing, via a form that's also available on the "Niwot Marijuana Special Use Review" website, bit.ly/24i8aID

Further information: That website also has a link to more detailed information about the application, Land Use Docket SU-15-0001, including county staff memos and hundreds of pages of materials from agencies that reviewed the application, including written comments submitted before the county Planning Commission's April 20 hearing. It's also available on the docket's own web page, bit.ly/1W4698w, or at the Land Use Department's office at 2045 13th St., Boulder.

Commissioners' decision: The commissioners aren't to act on the proposal on June 29. They've set a separate meeting for 11 a.m. June 30, also in the downtown Boulder County Courthouse's third-floor meeting room. That June 30 meeting will be open to the public, but no additional public testimony is

Although it's still a month away, supporters and opponents of an application to locate a retail marijuana establishment in a now-vacant Niwot building [can begin signing up to speak](#) during the Boulder County commissioners' June 29 public hearing on that proposal.

The pot shop application from the property's owner, Ernie Craumer, and his Colorado Real Estate Holdings LLC has been a source of controversy in the unincorporated Boulder County community for more than a year and [drew an overflow crowd of more than 100 people](#) to an April 20 Planning Commission hearing.

More than 40 of those people spoke during that six-hour hearing, most of them objecting to allowing recreational marijuana products to be sold from Craumer's property at 6924 N. 79th St.

Some, however, argued that anti-pot-shop speakers were exaggerating the negative impacts those critics predicted such a business and its customers would bring to Niwot.

Niwot Community Association President Dick Piland and Niwot Business Association President Anthony Santelli said on Wednesday that their organizations aren't taking formal stands for or against the marijuana establishment application, but both said they personally continue to oppose the proposal.

Such a business would not fit into Niwot's character as a "teeny-weeny town," said Santelli, owner of the Niwot Tavern.

While what's being proposed "looks like a small operation, it basically will have a very large draw outside the community," Santelli said.

Said Piland: "I personally do not feel that a pot shop is compatible" with "the character of Niwot."

Piland said his research and reading about the negative affects that marijuana use can have on people's health, "especially children," have convinced him that legalizing recreational marijuana use in Colorado "is a bad experiment ... I feel the experiment has failed."

Steve Romano, spokesman No Pot in Niwot, an organization formed last year to fight the proposed marijuana business, said on Wednesday that his group's testimony will probably focus on what he said has been "the Land Use staff's misinterpretation" of the Niwot Service Area chapter in the Boulder County Comprehensive Plan.

Romano said that part of the comp plan has "very specific requirements" for any business seeking to locate in Niwot, such as one that such businesses "primarily serve the local area."

But Diane Zimmermann, one of the few Niwot residents who spoke in support of the marijuana business application at April's Planning Commission hearing, said on Wednesday that she continues to disagree with the proposed shop's opponents and intends to say so, again, on June 29.

"I think it's absolutely compatible" with the Niwot Business Association's goals to attract businesses and customers, Zimmermann said. She said of the business' potential marijuana purchasers: "They aren't criminals or drug lords or anything like that. They're just regular people."

In April, Planning Commission members concluded that Craumer's application to use the property for a retail marijuana establishment met standards and criteria in the Boulder County Comprehensive Plan and the county's land use and zoning code. The planning panel's members voted 6-0 to recommend that the Board of County Commissioners approve the pot-shop application.

County commissioners will have the final say, and foes and backers of the

expected to be taken then.

proposed marijuana business can make their cases in person on June 29.

People who [sign up online](#) in advance of the commissioners' public hearing will get the first speaking slots. People who wait and sign up in person at the hearing itself can also speak; they'll be called up in the order they've signed up that afternoon.

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