

Battle over marijuana grow and retail facility in Niwot moves to Round

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The marijuana business battle lines in Niwot were first drawn months ago.

That battle may finally be moving on to the next level.

Next week the Boulder County Land Use Department will close its second round of public comment on a proposed marijuana grow and retail facility in Niwot, and then spend a few days drafting a staff recommendation which will be released Oct. 28.

Property owner Ernie Craumer had first filed his special use request in June. On July 2 the county responded to Craumer's application stating the "current level of detail in your application is insufficient" to formulate a recommendation relative to the criteria for a special use review.

A month ago Craumer sent in his revised application, including a lengthy study by a consulting firm to address the initial concerns. Now it's back in the hands of the land use team.

"We resubmitted our special use application with the county in mid September," Craumer said Friday. "Land use staff has forwarded the updated application to the appropriate referral agencies for their comments and we anticipate the staff recommendation to be rendered by the end of October."

Opponents of the pot business have a variety of concerns including more traffic, bad odor, an increase in crime, and the shop's proximity to a school.

Should land use recommend moving forward with the proposed business, it goes on to the planning commission which will also review the application, hold a public hearing and review the land use department's recommendation.

If it gets through that round, it's on to the county commissioners who also hold a public hearing to review the application and the staff recommendations.

"We were advised from the onset of this process that the timing could range from nine months to two years depending on complexity of the application, staffing needs by the county, and various other issues," Craumer said.

The amount of marijuana money in the state is growing, and with that the tax revenues

According to the Colorado Department of Revenue, marijuana tax revenues jumped from \$25 million in the first five months of 2014 to \$44 million in the first five months of 2015.

In Boulder County, those revenues surged from \$194,000 to \$366,000 over the same period. Those revenue figures are expected to grow.

In May, residents opposed to the marijuana facility launched a nonprofit organization named No Pot in Niwot.

The property at 6924 N. 79th St. is between the Cottonwood Park Square shopping center and the Countryside Condos, a short walk from downtown.

Despite the opposition, there are those who are not averse to the project.

"Yes, there are people here who are not up in arms, and do not oppose it," said Tim Wise, owner of Wise Buys Antiques on 2nd Ave. "We have taken a neutral position. We have not taken a stance."

One business owner who has taken a position is Erin Brooke, who owns Sugar Beet Station, a gift and décor shop in Niwot.

"People are being misled on this issue. We have a lot of grow operations in Boulder without any problems," Brooke said Friday.

"This is another business coming into our community. It would help Niwot with tax revenue. We have bars and liquor stores which are now supposed to be the same thing," she added. "It's just fear mongering."

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