

Planning group stresses need for EIR on cannabis issue

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The Calaveras Planning Coalition, a consortium of groups and individuals interested in planning and land use issues in Calaveras County, has issued a Position Paper on the issues concerning legalized commercial cannabis cultivation.

Although “reasonable minds may disagree,” the Position Paper says that the coalition ‘agreed that it would be best if the county prepared a thorough study of the options via an EIR (Environmental Impact Report), provided opportunities for informed public discussion, and made a rational, well considered final decision.”

The county is currently preparing an EIR as part of the process of drafting a permanent ordinance to replace the current interim urgency ordinance. However, as the Position Paper says, “Measure D, the cannabis control initiative that will appear on the November ballot, is similar to the permanent ordinance proposed by the county, but, as an initiative of the people, Measure D ... would not require an EIR.”

The EIR would, according to the statement, evaluate many types of potential impacts of the ordinance, evaluate a range of alternatives, and identify feasible mitigation measures. A full and comprehensive EIR “can and should” evaluate the financial feasibility of mitigation measures, and evaluate the *cumulative impacts* of the commercial cannabis industry in Calaveras County, not just the impacts of individual commercial cannabis operations.

In addition, the statement says, “in preparing an EIR and an ordinance, the county must provide for public involvement in the process. The (coalition) promotes public participation in the county’s land use decision making process.”

Finally, the statement says “when the Board of Supervisors makes a decision following the preparation of an EIR, the board is required to adopt findings of fact. These findings must disclose the rational course between the evidence before the board and their ultimate decision. This provides for a high level of accountability to the people.”

The full text is available at www.calaverascap.com.

The Calaveras Planning Coalition is a project of the Community Action Project and is facilitated by Tom Infusino. It has met every month since January 2006.