

Board moves closer to new cannabis code

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A 3-2 majority of the Calaveras County Board of Supervisors pushed forward a plan once again to allow the commercial cultivation of cannabis despite vocal opposition and allegations of corruption during meetings Tuesday and Wednesday.

District 2 Supervisor and Board Chairman Jack Garamendi, District 3 Supervisor Merita Callaway and District 5 Supervisor Benjamin Stopper voted in favor of forming a new county department to oversee commercial cannabis cultivation in the county and first reading of a proposed ordinance to regulate production of the controversial crop.

A third piece of the cannabis puzzle, introduction of an ordinance to establish a “Cannabis Background Clearance Badge” program was pushed back to an Oct. 8 meeting as the board completed two days of lengthy hearings.

Many members of the public voiced their frustration the board was once again considering the commercial production of cannabis after a two-year urgency ordinance permitting the practice ended after two of the pro-cannabis supervisors were ousted from office in 2016.

This week’s meetings attracted signs of “Recall Stopper” – pointing out just how volatile it is to serve the District 5, which has a history of recall efforts, a successful recall in 2016 and a lengthy history of one-term supervisors.

The anti-cannabis opposition will have another opportunity to voice displeasure when the proposed commercial cannabis ordinance returns Oct. 15 to the board for final approval.

District 1 Supervisor Gary Tofanelli and District 4 Supervisor Dennis Mills expressed their dismay at the end of Wednesday’s meeting that completion of the General Plan update has taken a back seat to the commercial cannabis agenda.

Tofanelli reminded the board they voted 5-0 near the beginning of the year to make the General Plan update, which has been in the works for a dozen years, the county’s No. 1 priority.

The General Plan update has taken “a back stage and back door” to cannabis, Tofanelli said.

Staff said the General Plan might be ready for board consideration in two weeks.