

News from around the Ojai Valley

Dispensaries receive city's security rules



Details

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Ojai Valley news photo by Andra Belknap

Painters work at the Sespe Creek Collective's new dispensary space in Bryant Circle Oct. 11.

Andra Belknap, *Ojai Valley News* reporter

“I was gifted some new security regulations Friday night,” remarked Sespe Creek Collective CEO Chelsea Sutula during an Ojai City Council meeting Oct. 10.

Indeed, Ojai City Manager Steve McClary issued long-awaited security regulations Oct. 6 for Ojai's three cannabis dispensaries and delivery services.

The regulations require, among other things, that each medical cannabis business use security cameras to record all exterior doors, parking areas and all areas inside the businesses except bathrooms and changing rooms. The cameras will monitor the businesses 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The businesses also will be required to hire one uniformed security guard each to patrol their business area during hours of operation. An additional stipulation requires the businesses to provide for an off-hours security guard, who will patrol the area after business hours. The businesses may share in the cost of the after-hours security guard. The requirement of the after-hours security guard will be revisited 90 day after the business operations begin.

McClary will additionally require each business to undergo a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) review by the Ventura County Sheriff's Office's (VCSO) Ojai Patrol Station before they open their doors to the public.

Sutula completed her CPTED review with VCSO Capt. James Fryhoff Oct. 10, Fryhoff confirmed.

According to Fryhoff, a CPTED review allows law enforcement officers to walk through a new business location and point out any security concerns to the owner, including potential visibility issues.

Sutula used the meeting to raise concerns about the recently-issued security requirements.

“The state is only requiring that we have cameras on inventory, cash, entrances and exits,” she said. “We don't need cameras in the kitchen, I don't need a camera on myself, at the computer all day. When I discussed this with Capt. Fryhoff today, he was pretty much in agreement.”

Fryhoff confirmed that he agreed with Sutula's observations and communicated his thoughts to McClary via email.

“As far as cameras go, we only need to have cameras on the exterior of the business so that we can see people coming and going in case a crime occurs,” Fryhoff said. “I don't need to see their kitchen. I don't need to see Chelsea's office.”

Sutula also objected to the presence of an after-hours security guard and stated that Fryhoff was in agreement.

“I was ok either way,” said Fryhoff. “(McClary's) decision was, let's have it for the 90 days.”

“The reality is, I would rather start with more security to deter anybody and then back it off rather than not having it for those 90 days and have something occur,” Fryhoff added.

Sutula said she's not sure if McClary's security regulations are final, given the ongoing discussions with Fryhoff.

“I'm starting to run out of money because this is dragging on so long,” she added.

Risa Horowitz, a local medical cannabis activist, also complained to the City Council about the long-running process.

“Patients are suffering,” she said.

In the final minutes of the Oct. 10 City Council meeting, McClary noted that Ojai started its medical cannabis regulation process after the state of California did and has finished prior to the state.

Councilman William Weirick requested that the Council discuss its medical cannabis regulations during the Council's Oct. 24 regular meeting. The Oct. 24 meeting agenda is not yet publicly available.

Sutula is aiming to open Sespe Creek's doors by the end of the month, she said, though delivery operations may begin before the dispensary is open to customers.

Jeff Kröll, co-founder of the Shangri La Care Cooperative (SLCC) hopes to open his doors by Nov. 15, he said.

Debbie Young, owner of AgMD, which will do business under the name Ojai Greens, did not respond to a request for comment regarding her business' opening as of press time.

The Ojai City Council will next convene at 7 p.m. Oct. 24 in City Council Chambers, 401 S. Ventura St.

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