

# Pot clubs ask who's boss

**■ Regulation gap:** Santa Cruz officials debate how to handle oversight of medicinal marijuana groups.

BY JOHN WOOLFOLK  
Mercury News Staff Writer

As Santa Cruz prepares for final adoption of a law sanctioning medicinal marijuana groups, city officials are trying to figure out who's going to oversee the growing groups of ailing tokers.

The ordinance, approved in a unanimous vote of the city council March 28, would become law May 11,

or 30 days after its final reading on Tuesday.

It was intended to give the city's blessing to local organizations such as the Wo/Men's Alliance for Medical Marijuana, or WAMM, a collective whose 200 members share pot to ease symptoms of AIDS, cancer and other ailments.

Since then, at least two other medicinal marijuana groups have sought

the city's approval, and found no one at City Hall ready to look them over.

"It's a big question that I think everybody needs to look at," said Deputy Police Chief Jeff Locke. "The ordinance spells out what people have to do, but who confirms that in fact the organizations comply with the ordinance?"

No changes are proposed at the second reading, council members

said.

But City Attorney John Barisone said he has been talking with the police about some sort of registration system for medicinal marijuana groups, which will probably be proposed to the council in coming weeks.

Because of staffing levels and other priorities, the police would rather have someone else in city government do the checking, Locke said.

Since state voters in 1996 approved Proposition 215 to allow medicinal marijuana use, local police

have tried to accommodate ill smokers within the law.

Santa Cruz's ordinance is designed to give police clearer policy guidelines. It's based upon a law passed by Oakland two years ago to sanction the Oakland Cannabis Buyer's Cooperative. That club is appealing its closing by drug authorities in federal court.

Unlike Oakland's law, however, Santa Cruz's prohibits distribution of marijuana for a profit.

Among the new groups seeking  
*See POT CLUBS, Page 7B*

## Pot clubs waiting for blessing

### ■ POT CLUBS

from Page 1B

city approval is Santa Cruz Cannabis Pharmaceuticals. It started recently as a medicinal marijuana delivery service and now has about 80 members, said Kate Wells, the group's chief executive officer.

Another group, Santa Cruz Citizens for Medical Marijuana, is resurfacing after a period of dormancy, said Fred Seike, one of its founders. The group formed after county voters in 1992 overwhelmingly passed

**The groups** ..... an advisory measure approving medicinal marijuana, and at one time had 200 to 300 members, he said. But it folded a few years ago out of concern about federal drug raids.

**City Hall** ..... City leaders and medicinal marijuana advocates, however, say Santa Cruz isn't likely to

**ready to** ..... be overwhelmed by medicinal pot smokers.

**check** ..... Proposition 215 author Dennis Peron said that the sick don't need to move to Santa Cruz to get pot. While federal authorities have shut Peron's San Francisco medicinal marijuana club, several others have sprung up.

**them.** ..... Peron said a recent ruling on the Oakland club's case suggests the court soon may allow medicinal marijuana clubs closed by federal drug agents to reopen.

Councilman Mike Rotkin said that because Santa Cruz's ordinance prohibits profiting off pot, few medicinal marijuana groups will take advantage of it.

"How many groups out there want to deliver free or at-cost marijuana to people?" Rotkin asked.

Contact John Woolfolk at  
jwoolfolk@sjmercury.com or (831)  
423-3234.