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County accepts state funds for anti-pot battle

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Nettled Noren tired of fracas over CAMP

Santa Cruz County Sheriff Al Noren said he's at the point where it doesn't matter whether the county accepts a \$240,000 grant for marijuana suppression.

"I really don't care" whether the grant goes through, Noren said yesterday after supervisors had voted. The Campaign Against Marijuana Planting will go on next summer "come hell or high water," he said. The state grant goes for equipment and an extra prosecutor for marijuana cases, but is not essential for the program.

"Santa Cruz is not a separate entity. Yet, anyway," Noren said. "We're still part of the whole setup. Marijuana is against the law."

For those who say marijuana has medicinal purposes, Noren said, "there is synthesized marijuana."

Noren has heard about complaints that CAMP helicopters are flying low, but he said "a lot of those are anonymous." The helicopters, which are owned by

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By LANE WALLACE
STAFF WRITER

Two weeks after balking at spending state money for an anti-marijuana campaign, Santa Cruz County supervisors approved the expenditures yesterday for the Sheriff's Office.

Supervisors didn't take the entire \$240,000 grant, holding off acceptance of \$39,000 for an infrared heat-seeking device.

Not accepting part of the grant could put the entire grant in jeopardy, Mike Carrington, assistant director of the Office of Criminal Justice Planning, said from Sacramento yesterday afternoon after learning of the vote.

"That will have to be evaluated," said Carrington, who also said it was "puzzling" that supervisors would hold back on the infrared device.

County Administrative Officer Susan Mauriello said rejection of the entire grant "is not a likely scenario," and was backed up by Supervisor Fred Keeley, who dealt with the Criminal Justice Planning office over the last two weeks.

Mauriello said she will make a report on what the infrared device does next month. Supervisors will then decide whether to accept the device or request other equipment in lieu of it. Most of the grant is for replacement of equipment.

Keeley was the swing vote on
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the grant. When the question came up two weeks ago at a raucous hearing attended by 200 people opposed to the grant, Keeley expressed concern whether the CAMP program was targeting the major growers.

Yesterday's meeting was similar to the one two weeks ago. The audience spent two hours urging supervisors to reject the state grant, calling marijuana "the least toxic chemical known to humankind" and labeling CAMP "tyranny" and a "reign of terror." Several urged legalization for medical purposes.

The crowd was smaller, about 60 instead of the 200 who showed up two weeks ago, and fewer catcalls were directed at supervisors from the audience.

The approval came as no surprise, because Keeley had announced several days earlier he would support acceptance of the grant. Gary Patton got a standing ovation when he cast the lone dissenting vote; four votes were needed to accept the money in the middle of a fiscal year. Jan Beautz, Ray Belgard and Walt Symons joined Keeley in favoring acceptance.

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the state, fly over sparsely populated areas where it's suspected marijuana is being grown.

"We don't fly over the ocean" Noren said, because there's no marijuana being grown there.

— Lane Wallace

Keeley said his concerns were assuaged after two meetings with Sheriff Al Noren in the last two weeks. Keeley drew a "mission statement" for CAMP that he said met with Noren's approval. The page-and-a-half statement says there is violent crime associated with the activities of major marijuana growers and dealers.

The statement also says CAMP "will comply with protocols of the Federal Aviation Administration" on helicopter flights used in searching for marijuana plants. Keeley said there have been a number of complaints about low-flying helicopters disturbing residents.

Several speakers expressed concern that the infrared device could be used for spying on people; sheriff's deputies have said it won't be used for that. Noren attended the meeting two weeks ago, but was not present yesterday.

Theodora Kerry, spokeswoman for the Santa Cruz Hemp Council, urged supervisors "not to fund this dirty little war" on marijuana.

"We're the ones whose doors are broken down," Kerry said, saying law enforcement should concentrate on violent crimes.

Pot smokers, she said, "are not doopey enough to make sense of all this craziness."

Those who spoke for medicinal marijuana pointed to passage of an advisory vote in the county last year advocating legality of such use. Supervisors asked for a report on the effects of that vote (known as Measure A) on April 12.

Supervisor Jan Beautz said rejecting the grant "might send a message" to the Office of Criminal Justice Planning and hurt the county's ability to get other grants. Santa Cruz County now gets \$750,000 a year in grants from OCJP for other law enforcement and prosecution.