

MEDICAL MARIJUANA

Capitola, Aptos could see stricter marijuana rules

Drugs
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✓ APTOS — Outdoor medical marijuana grows would be banned in Aptos, Corralitos and part of Capitola under a county proposal likely to be voted on Tuesday.

While Santa Cruz County is putting the finishing touches on local pot cultivation rules that place it on the cutting edge of medical marijuana ordinances statewide, county Board of Supervisors Chairman Zach Friend wants a partial exception for his constituents. Indoor grows would be allowed.

"Throughout the entire process, I've heard from constituents that say we don't have adequate protections on either the residential piece of the cultivation piece," Friend said. "If we can't make a policy that's universal, at least what I hope to do

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is something that will protect the residents of my own district."

A new law allows medical marijuana patients to grow up to 100 square feet of pot indoors or in their yard. It also dictates that size, location and operating rules of larger cultivations in mountainous areas of the county.

But Friend has always expressed unease at what he views as the permissiveness of the rules, arguing they don't go far enough to protect quality-of-life issues in residential neighborhoods.

Friend's proposal would prevent outdoor grows in those areas, and require a minimum of five acres for outdoor grows in mountainous regions. He doesn't believe the rules would limit marijuana access for legiti-

mate patients, pointing out that dispensaries and indoor grows are allowed.

"I think it would be hard to argue that's its difficult to find marijuana within Santa Cruz County," Friend said. "There's more weed than water around here."

It is not unusual for the county to pass district-specific rules. For example, dispensary requirements that shops be at least 600 feet from each other were softened in Boulder Creek at the request of Fifth District Supervisor Bruce McPherson, due to the town's small size and lack of commercial space.

If approved, the exception would apply in the county's Second District, which spans the coast from Opal Cliffs to the Pajaro River and extends north to the Santa Cruz Mountains summit.

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