

Valley Center Community Planning Group

Approved Minutes for a **Special Meeting** held on **March 26, 2025** at 7:30 p.m. in the Valley Center Library Community Room, 29200 Cole Grade Road, Valley Center, CA 92082.

Dori Rattray, **Chair**; Lisa Adams, **Vice-Chair**; James Garritson, **Secretary**

A=Absent; **Ab**=Abstention; **DRB**=Valley Center Design Review Board; **N**=Nay; **P**=Present; **R**=Recused; **VCCPG**=Valley Center Community Planning Group; **VCPRD**=Valley Center Parks & Recreation District; **Y**=Yea

Zoom Link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89485855299?pwd=w7Fy0jVN6AWEGcoAd2fSC8qJWWvDJq.1>

A. Roll Call

- The Meeting was called to order at **7:36 p.m.** and a Quorum was established with **12 members present**. Dr. Matthews* attended the meeting via Zoom.
- Lisa Adams - **P**
- Chris Barber - **P**
- Michelle Bothof - **A**
- Delores ChavezHarmes-**P**
- Vlad Ciupitu - **P**
- Susan Fajardo - **P**
- James Garritson - **P**
- Mary Hodson - **A**
- Steve Hutchison - **P**
- Karen Lieber - **A**
- Bob Littlejohn - **P**
- Matt Matthews - **P***
- LaVonne Norwood - **P**
- Dori Rattray - **P**
- Tom Stinson - **P**

B. Pledge of Allegiance - Chair Rattray

C. Public Comments: Members of the public may address the Planning Group on any topic not on the agenda.

- Jennifer Jessup shared how harmful cannabis is to wildlife. She shared that small farmers are not successful at growing and selling cannabis. Cannabis uses 6 gallons of water a day for each plant. She has concerns that the large amount of water required to grow cannabis will deplete well water and could also contaminate local water supplies.
- Larry Hensley shared that his entire neighborhood uses well water and cannabis might deplete necessary water resources. Growers will probably be outside of the Valley Center community. Crime has increased in communities with large cannabis farms. Cartels are establishing cannabis farms in Riverside County.
- Becky Rapp shared that San Diego County is considered the most biodiverse region in all of the continental United States. Cannabis growing operations are causing numerous problems all around California. Becky does not believe that the County has fully addressed all of the harm that the cannabis industry has brought to communities.
- Stephani Baxter (Virtual Attendance) shared her concerns about the Socially Equitable Cannabis Program. Mrs. Baxter explained she is a member of the Fallbrook Planning Group and they made a mistake by voting for Alternative #1.
- A public comment was made about increasing traffic concerns if this cannabis program is implemented in Valley Center.

E. Action items (VCCPG advisory vote may be taken on the following items)

1. SOCIAL EQUITY CANNABIS PROGRAM: This meeting is designed to review the draft EIR comments regarding the proposed program objectives, impacts and environmental issues considered, prior to the March 31st, 2025, deadline. A letter(On behalf of the Planning Group) and the draft comments will then be submitted to the County for review. Dr.

Matthews (Vote) [APPENDIX]

- Kathleen Lippert shared information about how the social equity cannabis program has impacted communities throughout San Diego County.

Dr. Matthews Comments:

- **Motion: To recommend that the County adopts Alternative 1 – No Project – Retention of Current Cannabis Regulations.**
- **Maker/Second:** Matthews/Harmes
- **Motion CARRIES 11-1-0 (Y-N-Ab)**
- Lisa Adams - Y
- Chris Barber - Y
- ~~Michelle Bothof~~ - A
- Delores ChavezHarmes-Y
- Vlad Ciupitu - Y
- Susan Fajardo - Y
- James Garritson - Y
- ~~Mary Hodson~~ - A
- Steve Hutchison - Y
- ~~Karen Lieber~~ - A
- Bob Littlejohn - Y
- Matt Matthews - Y
- LaVonne Norwood - N
- Dori Ratray - Y
- Tom Stinson - Y
- Dr. Matthews shared concerns about the County allowing cultivation of cannabis in Valley Center. There are numerous cannabis dispensaries around the County. It appears that the County is trying to allow more
- Dr. Matthews shared that the toxicity of cannabis is very harmful to all animals.
- Ms. Norwood shared that the cannabis subcommittee only has one member on it. She would like all applicants to follow County ordinances. She asked a question about how many dispensaries the community should allow in Valley Center. She wants any grower to follow the Design and Review Board requirements. Ms. Norwood stated that the comments made were done by one person, not a subcommittee, as it should have been. She wants the community to tell the County how many dispensaries are acceptable to the community. Alternative #1 is not a No Project alternative. Alternative #1 is to keep everything the way it is now. She asked if anyone knew the current laws and if that is how we want it to remain.
- Mr. Barber shared his background in working for law enforcement. He has concerns about an increase in crime in Valley Center if this program is implemented.
- Mrs. ChavezHarmes shared her concerns about rewarding criminals who have broken the law in the past. She is concerned that bees will pollinate cannabis and harm the biodiversity of this region. There will be an increase in traffic if this policy is approved. She supports a property owner growing cannabis for medicinal purposes for their family.
- Mr. Garritson shared his concerns about the growth of the cannabis industry and how it is being accessed by the young people on school campuses. He is very concerned about the future of young people who are vaping and sharing harmful marijuana at school. The State

of California and San Diego County have not fully understood how harmful marijuana is to young people. Part of the legalization of cannabis was for medicinal purposes related to people suffering from pain or in the late stages of cancer.

- Ms. Adams shared that she is totally against this harmful program.
- Mr. Hutchison shared his science background and agreed with some of the concerns that were shared tonight about the potential harm to the biodiversity that cannabis growing could have in Valley Center.
- Mr. Littlejohn shared that he and his wife had looked at a property in northern California that was located next to a small cannabis farm. They decided against the property because of the very bad odor of cannabis. He noted that the vote in Valley Center for marijuana legalization in 2016 was very close to 50/50, but that this project involved a different question for the community. He said that he supported the Fallbrook comments letter which listed Alternative 1 (No Project) as their primary recommendation and Alternative 4 (No Outside Grows) as secondary. He did not support a comments letter from the VCCPG which strayed beyond comments on the Environmental Impact Report to other issues with cannabis operations in our community because the county had said in their presentation on February 22 that comments beyond the EIR were unlikely to be considered by the EIR program team which is solely tasked with completing the EIR. Later, Mr. Littlejohn noted that while quite a few people on social media had made comments generally in support of the program, none of them showed up either for the Cannabis Subcommittee meeting on the 22nd or at this meeting.
- Ms. Fajardo shared that she has not found one benefit of the approval of the cannabis program.
- Mrs. ChavezHarmes shared that Supervisor Desmond voted against this ordinance.
- Chair Rattray shared that water depletion is occurring in areas with large cannabis operations. Cannabis crops are also increasing THC levels. She would like the Planning Group to consider pushing back against this program. Valley Center is located in a valley and cannabis produces a very foul odor.
- Mr. Ciupitu made a comment that Valley Center currently lacks enough law enforcement.

G. Adjournment

- Next regular meeting of VCCPG: **April 14, 2025 at 7 p.m.**
- **The meeting adjourned at 9:02 p.m.**
- **Minutes were approved on April 14, 2025.**

James Garritson, Secretary

Appendix VCCPG March 26, 2025 Minutes

COMMENTS ON THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO SOCIALLY EQUITABLE CANNABIS PROGRAM DRAFT EIR, REGULATORY AMENDMENTS. AND ZONING AMENDMENTS DRAFT EIR VALLEY CENTER IS PROPOSING: **ALTERNATIVE _____**

From more recent studies, facts and information obtained from municipalities that have had cannabis programs for a number of years, we conclude that the facts used to generate the DEIR were outdated and deficient and we question its accuracy.

Alternative 1 – No Project – Retention of Current Cannabis Regulations

Alternative 2 - The Proposed Project from the County

Alternative 3 – Cannabis Program with Expanded County Regulations

Alternative 4 – Cannabis Program with Outdoor Cannabis Cultivation Prohibition

Alternative 5 – Cannabis Program with Maximum 1 Acre of Outdoor Cannabis Cultivation Canopy

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DRAFT COMMENTS
Valley Center Community Planning Group
March 22, 2025

**COMMENTS ON THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
SOCIALLY EQUITABLE CANNABIS PROGRAM
DRAFT EIR, REGULATORY AMENDMENTS.
AND ZONING AMENDMENTS**

DRAFT EIR

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There many questions and concerns regarding setbacks, outdoor temporary events, Alternative 2, which is being called “The Program”, is outdoor cultivation. Alternative 4 prohibits outdoor cultivation. Data from other municipalities that have had cannabis programs for a number of years and that was not included in this DEIR, as well as new data that is just being discovered, shows that odors, pesticides, water, runoff and other factors from outdoor cultivation have had and continue to have substantially negative effects and threaten the health and safety of residents, especially growing children. In addition, trends for cultivation licenses in regions like Riverside County, show that outdoor cultivation licenses are minimal, thus no real impact to this Program in removing outdoor grows.

Residents that will be subjected to the Cannabis Program in their unincorporated areas should have a major weighted say in deciding whether or not indoor or outdoor cultivation will be allowed, because the agriculturally zoned lands where any type of cannabis cultivation is allowed in Alternatives 1,2,3,4,5 are adjacent to residential zones where families live.