

## Lauren Davidson

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**To:** Planning

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To the commissioners of Okanogan County,

I would first like to thank the office of the commissioner for their close attention to this new and exciting industry. I compliment your sense of braveness in what many other county commissioners lack in courage and foresight. I would like to address the potential positives and the concerns of the Okanogan residences.

First the community concerns:

1. **Youth access:** no one under the age of 21 is allowed on the farms. Our inventory is strictly monitored by the LCB. I doubt any of the producers would sell to anyone except to the retailers, especially to minors, for fear of losing their license and worse, prosecution. Obtaining the license was no easy task and costly. At this time, studies have shown there is a DECREASE in teenage use of marijuana. Since the state legalization of marijuana, the "coolness" is no longer as valid. Even if the farms and the retail stores did not exist, marijuana is readily available and grown yearly in the Okanogan County. I know this because since I have been in the business I have met quite of a few of these growers.
2. **Overdose, Drugged driving:** overdose on marijuana is a possibility but very unlikely, such as it would be with any other intoxicants. The difference is that when someone use marijuana, there is no motivation to drive. For the most part, the user just wants to sit on a couch and listen to music or watch a Spanish soap-opera. They may not understand language, but, they're still laughing. Studies have also shown that it is much more likely to overdose on other intoxicants compared to marijuana. I have spoken to many other ER doctors and they have agreed on this point; over 95% of motor vehicle accidents have occurred due to alcohol, meth, heroin, etc and less than 5% by marijuana use. Also, it is very rare to care for a patient in the Emergency Room who has overdosed on marijuana. Will there be an increase chance that these percentages will change, maybe. But other research has shown the use of marijuana has not increased. The other difference is people can now purchase marijuana legally and at the same price as the black-market.
3. **Crime, Security:** since the farms have been operating over the past two years, I have not read or heard of any increase in crime due to the marijuana industry. Each farm is fenced, visually obscured from the outside and have 30+ cameras monitoring inside and outside of the farms. One could not come within 100ft of the fence without being spotted. These cameras also have night vision. All the cameras are recording for a minimum of 48 days. Breaking in and stealing plants is futile. The finish products are locked-up in a separate container with difficult to reach locks. Again, there are no blind spots.
4. **Light pollution, Increase in Dust, Environment impact:** The lights that are used are on only during the winter months when there is less sunlight. Even during this time, they are only used 12 hours at a time. The lights are on timers and shut off on the 12<sup>th</sup> hour. To decrease the light issue, we can set the lights to come on a 6am and off at 6pm during the winter months. Dust is also our complaint. We make a concerted effort to reduce the dust because it is not good for the plants. We noticed that most of the dust comes from the farms and orchards around us. That, we have no control of. The environmental impact is difficult to determine at this time. What I do know is that farmers are always seeking organic grow nutrients. This is what we take pride in and what the retail stores and customers prefer. My thought on this issue, it should be the states (LCB) responsibility to monitor and evaluate the environment.
5. **Decrease property values:** This is another subject that is too difficult to determine at this time. I am in the realstate business. My senses tell me that once marijuana becomes federally legal, every land that has a marijuana farm will see a significant increase in value. Just to give an example, I have been offered \$750,000 for my business that I have invested \$400,000. Imagine, federally legal, what I could get including the land. At this point, the lands that have been leased for marijuana growing has not decreased. The neighboring homes would be viewed as being next to any other commercial property. For instance, if Lowe's, Home Depot, Wal-Mart or even a Data wear-house developed near a residential community, the value for their homes would be impacted negatively.
6. **Rural Traffic:** This would need further studies to evaluate if more cars in the rural street have any impact or safety concerns.
7. **Odor:** Not sure how other farmers are handling their processing. I have one greenhouse dedicated for processing and the doors are closed. However, I am very willing to discuss any ways to work with the small community in my area on this issue. I'm sure other farmers have the same sentiment.

8. Second-hand smoke: There is no smoking of any material on the farms. That is a LCB rule. In order to get second-hand smoke high, one must be in a closed room with other individuals smoking marijuana. It will not happen in an open field.

Expressed Commissioner's concerns:

1. Fear of outsiders: Not sure what the Commissioners mean by outsiders. But, if they are talking about drug abusers, marijuana users are very different class of individuals when compared to meth or heroin users. Marijuana users are still productive individuals in the community. The others are more likely not to be. If the Commissioners are concerned with an increase population of gang members, this would not be the cause of the marijuana business. As alluded to above, retail stores are able to sell marijuana at the same price as the black-market. This does not interest this group of individual, no profit in it for them. Hence, one of the positives of marijuana legalization.
2. Not enough revenue sharing, not sure of the economic impact: This industry is just too new and don't know if even the most brilliant economist could definitely predict what will happen economically in the next 5 years. But, this being said, I know more jobs have been developed, more money is being spent in the local stores, more money for families, more opportunities for less educated individuals to improve their lives. These are just a few of the positive economic impacts. Revenue sharing is something the Commissioners and the community will need to determine what is best for the Okanogan County.
3. LCB not enforcing own rules and not responsive to the County needs: This also I'm ignorant on the issues between the Commissioners and the LCB. I recommend the Commissioner make a list of all the issues to all marijuana business owners. Let's develop dialogue and find ways we could help each other. This I believe would be very beneficial to all parties.

The positives:

1. The Okanogan County will now make money on a product that no one would be able to diminish or have shown success in ridding marijuana.
2. Tax revenues have exceeded its projections.
3. Increase employment as a career.
4. Removed a method for gang members to make money.
5. Monitored by the LCB
6. The possibility to increase TOURISMS to the county
7. Developing improved communications between the marijuana business owners and the commissioners.
8. Paving the way for greater industrial growth through marijuana/commercial hemp production.
9. An alternate method for pain management and possibility of decreasing the incident of prescription opiates.
10. Organic nutrients used that decrease the use of other environmentally hazardous materials.
11. More money for the local PUD and other local municipalities.
12. Overall more money spent in the community.

Thank you for your time.