

Marijuana competition begins

By Janet DelTufo, Assistant Editor

Wickenburg Alternative Medical Center (WAMC) is apparently not the only group that would like to dispense and cultivate medical marijuana in town, as the group's first possible sign of competition addressed the Wickenburg Town Council last week.

Phoenix resident Travis Pollock, who told the council he owns two medical marijuana dispensaries and runs five cultivation facilities in Colorado, also made a brief mention that he was working with an unnamed company in Arizona.

Pollock said he was with a company called Accessible Arizona. He expressed concern with a WAMC request that a local medical marijuana ordinance would require Wickenburg residency.

"I would question the legitimacy of a local zoning ordinance eliminating any business from operating in Wickenburg based upon residential requirements," said Pollock. "I am not here tonight to be a dispensary owner in your municipality, but I would question if you require a residential requirement.

"There are many levels to this industry, and we currently are working with an owner ...," Pollock added. "We will be helping and trying to voice our opinions through this whole process."

Mayor Kelly Blunt told the council and the audience that approving a medical marijuana ordinance for the town was really out of the council's hands.

"Whether we agree with it or not, the voters passed it, and now we have to deal with it," Blunt said. "I do think it is a little excessive to say that a dispensary needs to be 500 feet from a church or a residential area. School, I understand, but I am thinking off the top of my head we have the Catholic Church across from Bashas' and Bashas' sells much more potent stuff than medical marijuana by a long shot. These are medical dispensaries and not Joe-selling-out-his-back-door."

Town Planner Steve Boyle and Councilman Scott Stewart reminded the council to keep it simple.

"If you make it too difficult, no one is going to put in an application for here, and then everybody who manages to come up with one of these cards is going to be allowed to grow 12 plants, and that will be an enforcement nightmare," Stewart said.

The WAMC reminded the council and the audience that it was proposing a transparent organization to benefit local 501(c)3 organizations.

"You have to do business in a very conservative way here in Wickenburg, and what I am looking at is having something run the way you want it run," said Dr. Edward Kirk of WAMC.

The Arizona Department of Health Services will begin accepting dispensary and grow applications this spring.