

## MY WORD

County can do better with Measure A

By Mark Thurmond

Using his official position as chair of the Planning Commission, Mr. (Noah) Levy assumes a frontman role for cannabis growers in deceiving voters about Measure A. (Times-Standard, Feb 25, Page A4)

In opposing Measure A, Mr. Levy is saying he wants to allow a further tripling of cannabis permits, from the current 1,200 to 3,500. He wants grows to expand further so there are more and more industrial mega-grows insinuating their impacts throughout our watersheds and neighborhoods, taking more and more water, and leaving more and more pollutants and junk. He wants voters to believe that without Measure A, the environment would be better off with more water depletion of rivers and aquifers, with more fertilizer and chemical pollution of soil and rivers, with more plastic pollution all over, and with more light, noise, and air pollution of neighborhoods and wildlife. Why would anyone want this? Could it be money?

He also wants voters to believe that structures like water tanks and solar panels, which would help protect the environment, would be prohibited in Measure A. As Mr. Levy would say — as an official, this is 'BS'. Measure A actually requires water tanks; need to read the measure, Mr. Levy. The environmental imperative of Measure A is firm; if the county should restrict, or try to restrict, structures that would promote environmentally sound practices, such as solar panels or whatever, the county would be in violation of Measure A. The Measure mandates that the county's policy and actions serve to protect Humboldt's environment. He is wrong on all counts.

Mr. Levy wants us to believe the system used to establish current cannabis ordinances, environmental impact reports, and watershed allocations of permits involved transparent, so-called public processes, with compromises, give and take, and songs around the campfire. There were many public inputs, including state agencies, growers, environmental groups, neighborhoods, and residents. These comments and recommendations, which are part of the public record, included small (less than 10,000 sf) grows only, strong enforcement of regulations, monitoring of water flow and quality, protecting domestic wells, and assessments of carrying capacity and aquifers to determine what watersheds can bear. There were no advocates for large, industrial mega-grows, for swamping watersheds with 3,500 permits, for laissez-faire enforcement, or for not mitigating impacts. What emerged from behind the Planning Department's closed doors, however, bears little resemblance to the public comments. Instead, we have industrial mega-grows of 8 acres, 30 times larger than a 10,000 sf grow, no carrying capacity or aquifer studies, no protections for neighbors, no routine water monitoring, and a smacking 3,500 permits allowed. The environment, neighborhoods, and residents were done in by the big money interests, and it was all made to look legitimate with lots of public meetings and input. But, alas, no output.

Mr. Levy proclaims that our current county system "... has succeeded in mitigating most impacts that cannabis cultivation can have on streamflows, water quality, wildlife, and neighborhoods." Sadly, Mr Levy is not up to date with the status of mitigating impacts. For example, the cornerstone EIR for current ordinances and procedures calls for "routine monitoring" of stream flow and water quality of salmonid streams, but for six years no salmonid stream has seen such EIR monitoring. Thus, there has been no success in mitigating impacts of fertilizers, rodenticides, insecticides, and other chemicals leaching into streams from cannabis cultivation. The water in these streams simply has not been tested, and, thus, there also can be no success claimed in mitigating the impact of cannabis water use on stream flows. As a frontman for the growers, he wants to deceive us in believing everything is working great. Measure A recognizes the county has failed and stops compounding pollution by stopping an additional 2500 grows from taking over more neighborhoods and streams.

An old proverb speaks to Humboldt County: "It's an ill bird that fouls its own nest." We can do better by voting Yes on Measure A.

*Mark Thurmond, a co-sponsor of Measure A, is a Kneeland resident.*