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Council still grappling with cannabis regs

■ Tuesday discussion indicates city may revisit ban on medical pot dispensaries

By Kim Beltran
Tribune Editor

An ordinance that would allow Calistoga residents to grow up to three marijuana plants outside on their private property will come back to the City Council next month for more discourse.

The struggle council members are having over whether and how to allow personal outdoor cannabis cultivation may have, interestingly enough, caused them to rethink the city's ban on medical marijuana dispensaries.

While the decision about allowing dispensaries was not the purpose of Tuesday night's council discussion, all five members shared their thoughts on the idea.

"I'm leaning toward allowing a dispensary or dispensaries in town," said councilman Gary Kraus. "I think sooner or later the state's going to come up with regulations on the recreational sale, and I'm not sure how that's going to play out here."

Councilwoman Irais Lopez-Ortega said that at the moment, she's not in favor of any kind of commercial cannabis dispensary and vice mayor Michael Dunsford was staunchly opposed.

Mayor Chris Canning said he might be inclined to allow such a use and let the "free market decide" whether the community is big enough to support it.

Councilmember Jim Barnes said "it's inevitable" and that he'd be in favor of allowing medical dispensaries, adding, "but that's a topic for another day."

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PHOTO BY CLARK JAMES MISHLER

Cutting back

Carlos Ruiz, owner of JM Guzman Tree Service, dismantles a massive oak tree at 1514 Myrtle Steet earlier this week. Large portions of the tree, including giant limbs growing above the residence, were rotted and had to be removed.

Lakeport leader tapped to run local schools

By Claudia Aceves
Tribune Reporter

The Calistoga Joint Unified School District launched a nationwide search for its next superintendent and found her little more than an hour's drive to the north.



Erin Smith-Hagberg

Erin Smith-Hagberg, superintendent at Lakeport Unified for the past 12 and a half years, has been offered the job in Calistoga, school trustees announced last week.

"We are grateful to all who participated in providing input regarding what is most desired to see in our next superintendent," Jeff Maxfield, president of the CJUSD Board of Trustees, said in a statement. "We are confident you will find that Ms. Smith-Hagberg is a perfect match."

Smith-Hagberg is expected to be formally introduced at the April 4 school board meeting.

"I am very excited to become a part of the Calistoga community," said Smith-Hagberg, who has been with Lakeport Unified School District for the duration of her educational career – 30 years. She started in the district as a teacher, moving into administration. She was the Lakeport Elementary School principal when she was hired to become the district's superintendent, according to a report last week in the Lake County News.

According to that story, Lakeport trustees didn't even launch an external

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Sunburst gets OK to expand

■ Planners also grant use permit to auto repair shop operating for two years on Grant Street without one

By Claudia Aceves
Tribune Reporter

A request by the Sunburst Calistoga Hotel to demolish an existing building and replace it with a two-story structure housing a restaurant and additional guest rooms was approved by the Calistoga Planning Commission on Wednesday.

Planners also granted a use permit to an automotive repair shop that has been operating in the city for two years without one.

The Sunburst at 1880 Lincoln Avenue is comprised of several single-story structures housing 50 overnight guest units.

When owner Calistoga Hotel Group began renovations to the spa, laundry, manager's unit and restaurant building in 2015 it discovered substantial water damage beneath the foundation as well as dry rot in the framing, senior planner Erik Lundquist told planning commissioners.

"Rather than address those, they've elected to submit a use permit application to raze the building and reconstruct a new structure that's slightly larger," Lundquist said. "Having a new building provides them an opportunity to do a small expansion."

The approved two-story structure will have a total floor area of approximately 10,737 square feet, with a restaurant being on the ground floor and 12 new overnight guest units on the second floor.

Also included is approximately 1,991 square feet of outdoor space for front porches, balconies and

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City red-tags 'green church,' closing it

By Pat Hampton
Tribune Publisher

Citing poor maintenance over long periods of time and a mold problem aggravated by a major water leak over Thanksgiving, city officials have red-tagged the 'Green Church' and closed the iconic building until extensive repairs and upgrades are completed.

Calistoga Fire Chief Steve Campbell and building inspec-

tor Brad Cannon made the decision Wednesday after meeting with Community Presbyterian Church officials, contractors and insurance agents.

Campbell said the priority was to keep the public safe, and after inspecting the three-floor building at 1407 Third St., he and Cannon decided to "red tag" the structure to keep the

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