



NEWS RELEASE

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Florence votes down Marijuana Dispensary

FLORENCE, AZ (7/17/13) – On Monday night, in a 2-4 vote, Florence Town Council failed to approve a conditional use permit for a marijuana dispensary proposed to be located between Pinal County Superior Court, a family oriented restaurant and Behavioral Systems Southwest’s Florence Residential Re-Entry Center (RRC).

Shedding light on the applicant’s proposed location violating town ordinances and the dangers of a marijuana dispensary being located at the proposed site, speakers opposing the location included Sheri George, Chairman of San Tan Valley Substance Abuse Coalition, Dr. Amy Fuller Superintendent of Florence Unified School District, and representatives from the Pinal County Attorney’s Office and Arizona Department of Corrections.

As adopted by the Town of Florence in their Planning and Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 152, Medical Marijuana, a marijuana dispensary or cultivation site shall not be operated within 660 feet of any “Sensitive Use,” as defined by the Town of Florence. Examples of “Sensitive Uses” include schools, public libraries, and places of worship.

During a June 20th Planning and Zoning Public Hearing, which resulted in an unfavorable recommendation for the permit, Pinal County Attorney Lando Voyles and Steve Doran, Program Director of Florence RRC Behavioral Systems Southwest, identified a public library and religious site existing within the prohibited buffer, respectively. Sheri George of San Tan Valley Substance Abuse Coalition concentrated on the dangers of further perpetuating the use of marijuana poses on our communities.

During Monday night’s public hearing and council meeting, at issue was whether the Pinal County Law Library met the definition of a public library. Being open to the public, possessing a collection of reference materials, and being publically funded, the Attorney for the Town of Florence found it reasonably fitting of Arizona’s statutory definition. Promoters of the proposal pointed at the notion the library failed to meet the intention as children did not utilize the facility. Dr. Fuller, representing 8,000 students, corrected that assertion and assured Council and the public that Florence schools utilize the library during mock trial preparation and receive instruction on performing legal research at the law library.

After several hours of public opinion being heard, Council failed to pass a motion to approve the proposal; meaning the marijuana dispensary failed to receive approval.

Pinal County Attorney Lando Voyles stated, *“Voting down this marijuana dispensary represents a significant victory. Hopefully our Pinal families understand the damages caused by marijuana and this ‘no’ vote reminds operators ignorance of the law excuses no one. Marijuana remains a schedule one substance, which deems it illegal and lacking any medical qualities. I thank our Pinal families for coming together to oppose this permit and look forward to working with other communities to ensure applicants abide by Federal, State, county and municipal laws and ordinances.”*

Dr. Amy Fuller, Superintendent of Florence Unified School District, stated, *“As professional educators and as a school district, we devoted countless years establishing a no tolerance culture in the minds of our kids at all of our school sites. We are grateful the Florence Town Council wisely followed their ordinances and laws to prevent the marijuana dispensary from opening in close proximity to our students.”*

Sheri George, Chairman of San Tan Valley Substance Abuse Coalition, stated, *“The San Tan Valley Substance Abuse Coalition, Pinal County Attorney Lando Voyles, Pinal County Sheriff Paul Babeu, and the Florence, J.O. Combs, and Coolidge Unified School Districts have partnered together on several projects, including the placement of the notMykid substance abuse program in all 15 middle and high schools, to reduce drug use in Pinal County. Allowing a marijuana dispensary to open in the Town of Florence would seriously impede the progress our community has worked so hard to achieve in the fight against drugs. I want to thank all the individuals, agencies, and organizations that took time out of their busy schedules to help defeat the proposal and make a positive difference in Pinal County.”*

Steve Doran, Program Director of Behavioral Systems Southwest, stated, *“It does not meet the zoning requirements and it lacks a rational basis to exist in our community. If we truly needed a medical marijuana dispensary in Florence why was the owner offering all kinds of monetary incentives to convince the Council to vote his way. It is a victory for everyone who lives, works, or visits the town of Florence and there is not one down side to the ‘no’ vote.”*

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