

**TRINITY COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT**

APPLICANT: Liza Wisniewski

REPORT BY: Colleen O'Sullivan

OWNER: same

APN: 012-270-50

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Variance from required 350 foot cannabis cultivation setback from one neighboring residence.

LOCATION: 2000 Redhill Road, Junction City, CA (see Figures 1 and 2)

PROJECT INFORMATION:

- A) Planning Area: Junction City
- B) Existing General Plan Designation: Rural Residential
- C) Existing Zoning: Rural Residential, 2.5 acre min. (RR-2.5)
- D) Existing Land Use: residence, commercial cannabis cultivation
- E) Adjacent Land Use Information:

	<u>Land Use</u>	<u>Zoning</u>	<u>General Plan Des.</u>
North:	residential	RR-2.5, SUD	Rural Residential
South:	residential	RR-2.5	Rural Residential
East:	residential	RR-2.5	Rural Residential
West:	residential	RR-2.5	Rural Residential

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The ordinance for “Commercial Marijuana Cultivation Regulation” includes a provision reading in part: “Cultivation will not be allowed within 350 feet of a residential structure on any adjoining parcels. Applications for a variance from this provision will be considered by the Trinity County Planning Commission.” (Ord. 315-823)

The Cannabis Cultivation ordinance defines the term “variance” as: “Variance” is defined as Trinity County Ordinance 315 section 31.” During its November 17, 2016 meeting the Commission spent time discussing both the state and county requirements for issuing a variance.

Each zoning classification and land use has an associated set of development standards, which are specified in the Trinity County Zoning Ordinance. Both State law and the zoning ordinance provide criteria to use in evaluating a variance application. Section 65906 of the California Government Code reads as follows:

"Variances from the terms of the zoning ordinance shall be granted only when, because of special circumstances applicable to the property, including size, shape, topography, location or surroundings, the strict application of the zoning ordinance deprives such property of privileges enjoyed by other properties in the vicinity and under identical zoning classification.

Any variance granted shall be subject to such conditions as will assure that the adjustment thereby authorized shall not constitute a grant of special privileges inconsistent with the limitations upon other properties in the vicinity and zone in which such property is located.

A variance shall not be granted for a parcel of property which authorizes a use or activity which is not otherwise expressly authorized by the zone regulation governing the parcel of property. The provisions of this section shall not apply to conditional use permits."

Section 31.A. of the zoning ordinance further elaborates on the State's Government Code standards by establishing the following criteria:

In considering a variance request, the following guidelines shall be observed:

1. No special privilege. A variance cannot be a special privilege extended to one individual property owner. The circumstances must be such that the same variance would be appropriate for any property owner facing similar circumstances.
2. Use variance prohibited. The consideration of "use variance" is specifically prohibited. These are variances, which request approval to locate a use in a zone from which it is prohibited by Ordinance.

3. Disservice not permitted. A variance must not be injurious to the public welfare, nor to adjacent properties.
4. Not adverse to a General or Specific Plan. A variance must be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Ordinance and cannot adversely affect the General Plan or Specific Plans of the County.
5. RD-1 Overlay Zone. Prior to approval of a variance for property within the RD-1 overlay zone, permission must be granted or deemed not necessary by the Secretary of Agriculture.

The cannabis cultivation site cannot be located elsewhere on the property due to the size of and suitable area for the parcel to support this activity. Therefore, the granting of the variance would not be a special privilege for the applicant that could not also apply to other commercial Cannabis growers under identical circumstances.

Annual Renewal:

As discussed during previous Commission meetings, variances from the cannabis cultivation setback (350 feet) are issued for a period of one year. (This should be tied to the license effective dates.) The renewal is predicted to be fairly simple and will be performed by the Planning Director or his/her designee. Some factors that would be included in the review would be any complaints received during the previous year, ensuring that the grower is in good standing with the County and State licensing requirements, and that there are no other changes to the property that could affect the continuation of the variance.

PROJECT EVALUATION:

The applicant is cultivating Cannabis on their 5 acre parcel located on Red Hill Road (Figure 1). This is a county road (road #415), with many residences located in the area. (Figure 2-zoning map). The site plan provided by the applicant (Figure 4) identifies on-site development, and Figure 3 shows the distance from the cultivation area to the nearest residence.

The applicant is working with the county Commercial Cannabis License program to become compliant with both State and county standards. The applicant has been compliant with the state Water Boards and other agencies prior to the county enacting a Cannabis Ordinance.

The cultivation site is well screened from the county road and the neighboring parcels. Very little grading had to occur to establish the site, and only a couple of trees were removed to make the site viable for cultivation. The site was established more than two years ago and there have been no complaints, according to the applicant.

Jeff Dickey, Code Enforcement Officer, has reviewed this project and provided the following comments: "The applicants could not move the cultivation area on the parcel without needing a variance from a different dwelling on another adjacent parcel. (Figure 4)." As of this writing, no other comments were received.

ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION:

The project is exempt from CEQA review under Section 15305(a) [minor alteration of land use limitations].

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the following:

Approval of the variance to allow reduction of the Cannabis cultivation setback from 350 feet to approximately 128 feet from the residence on APN 012-270-41, subject to the following conditions of approval and based on the following findings of fact:

Findings of Fact for the Use Permit:

1. There are special circumstances applicable to the property that, with strict application of the zoning ordinance, deprives it of privileges available to other properties with similar zoning in the vicinity that plan Cannabis cultivation.
2. The variance is not a grant of special privilege to the applicant because relocation would result in unnecessary grading and environmental damage due to site topography.
3. The granting of the variance is in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Ordinance provisions for commercial Cannabis cultivation.
4. No opposition from surrounding property owners or review agencies was submitted that would adversely affect approval of the variance.

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL LEE CANNABIS SETBACK VARIANCE (P-17-43)

1. The variance is approved for a period of one year from **April 1, 2017** through **March 31, 2018**; provided, however, that the variance may be renewed annually.
 - a. Application for renewal shall be made prior to expiration of the variance, preferably at least 30 days in advance;
 - b. shall not require a formal public hearing, unless specified by the Planning Director or referred to the Planning Commission; however, written notice shall be provided by the County to surrounding property owners at least ten (10) days prior to the Planning Director's decision to approve or deny the annual renewal; and

- c. shall be subject to a filing fee as specified by resolution of the Board of Supervisors.
 - d. The Planning Director, at his/her discretion, may approve, deny or refer the annual renewal request to the Planning Commission. The director shall not add or modify conditions of approval applied by the Planning Commission. If submitted to the Planning Commission by the Planning Director for action, no additional fees will be required.
 - e. Action to renew the variance by the Planning Director may be appealed to the Planning Commission in accordance with Section 34 of the Zoning Ordinance, including the required appeal fee.
2. The variance shall be subject to the securing of all necessary permits, licenses, and approvals for the proposed Cannabis cultivation operation from all County and State agencies having jurisdiction over any aspect the operation.
3. Structures on the property shall be in compliance with the California Building Code and the Trinity County Code.
4. The variance shall become effective after all applicable appeal periods have been expired or appeal processes have been exhausted. The applicant has the sole responsibility for renewing this variance before the expiration date listed above. The County will not provide a notice prior to the expiration date.

FIGURE 1 -PROJECT LOCATION MAP
P-17-49 - E. Wisniewski - CCL Variance Request



Figure 2 - ZONING MAP
P-17-49 - E. Wisniewski - CCL Variance Request

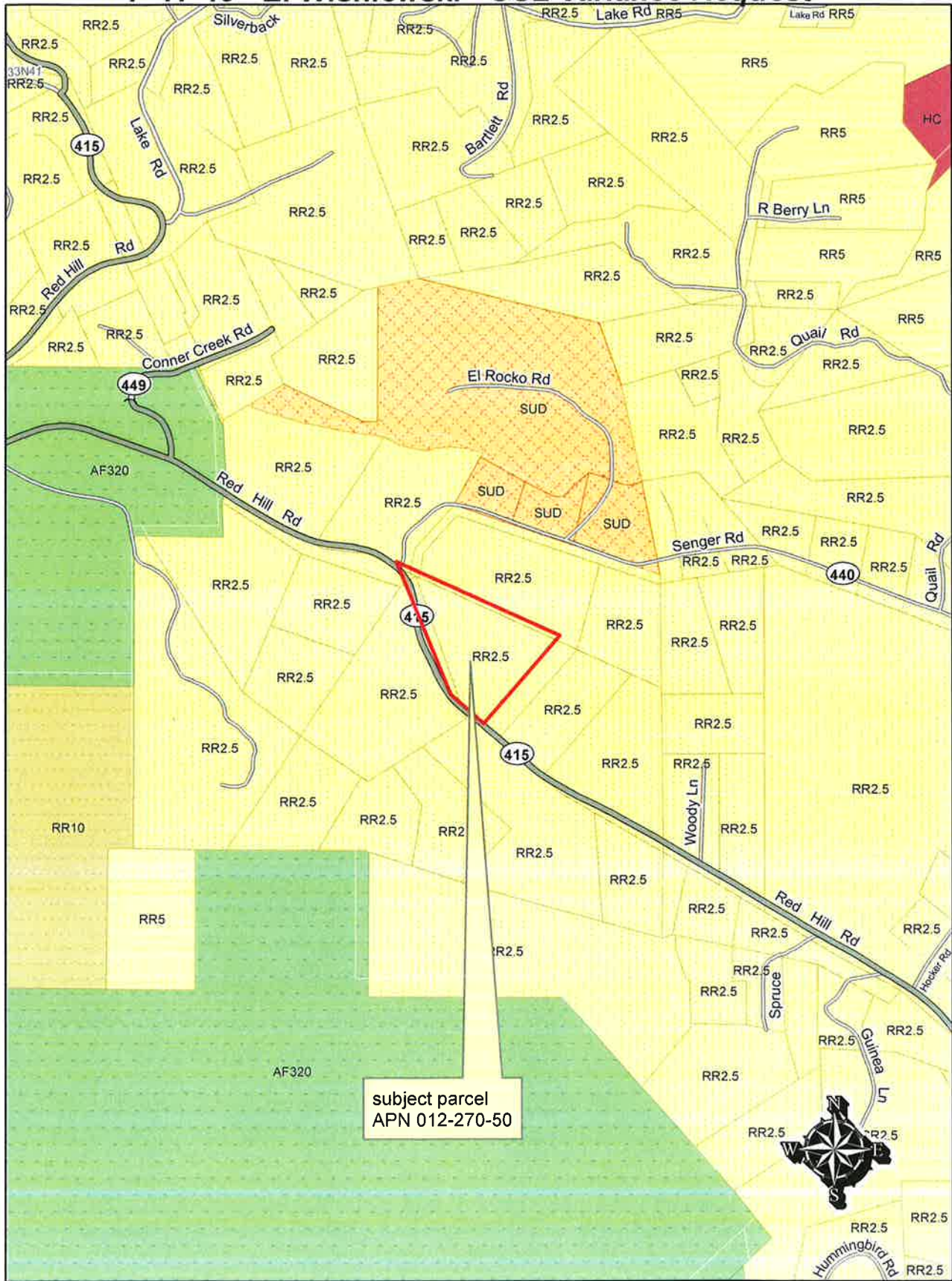


FIGURE 3 -ADJACENT DWELLING MAP
P-17-49 - E. Wisniewski - CCL Variance Request

