

## Lauren Davidson

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**From:** Peter Nansen <pdnnsn@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 16, 2016 11:01 PM  
**To:** albert\_roberts@hotmail.com; Planning; deeschulz7@gmail.com; mcmlandco@live.com; sigurdoshea@yahoo.com; prdart11@gmail.com; Sheilah Kennedy; Ray L. Campbell; Jim DeTro  
**Subject:** I-502 zoning and moratorium

I was born in Omak and lived here most of my life. I strongly support the cannabis industry as a very important economic boost to this county. My farm is just getting started but we have already spent well over \$200,000 locally. Most of that money came from outside of the county. In this coming growing season we plan to produce a crop conservatively worth \$2.2 million dollars using less than one acre of land. The non I-502 agricultural output of Okanogan County is reported to be about \$200 million per year. Just the 54 current I-502 permit farms, using less than thirty acres of land total, are projected to produce over \$100 million this year. With the expected growth, in the next five years that production will exceed \$200 million and constitute more than half of the total value of agriculture in Okanogan County. It will be the most valuable single product of the county and will have doubled our gross agricultural product. In doing so it will use less than sixty total acres of land but will provide good paying year round employment to several hundred people as well as increasing the demand for housing and all other services and products provided by local businesses. That is probably why the industry is so popular here.

Just before this moratorium was imposed, I was about to bring in over \$500,000 in new investment from the west side to set up new I-502 farms on my farm property which has been unproductive for over forty years. That project will employ over one hundred people with a payroll of over \$3,120,000 per year. There are at least eleven new farm projects intended for this county blocked by the moratorium. There are potentially many more. They won't wait for six months and Okanogan will lose literally millions of investment dollars and hundreds of additional new jobs that would be put into our economy just in the next few months if this moratorium is not withdrawn immediately.

Most of us are family operations and most of us have strong connections to this area. We are concerned about the community. We strongly support a greater return of tax dollars on the I-502 industry to local jurisdictions and we also believe in keeping cannabis, as well as alcohol and tobacco away from minors. This community, like many others suffers from problems with prescription painkillers and illegal drugs like heroin. All research shows that cannabis is never a "gateway drug" and generally acts to reduce addiction to those dangerous drugs. Before starting this farm I was a medicare consultant and doing that we became aware that many of our medicare clients had substantially reduced their use of dangerous prescription painkillers, instead using cannabis leading to much improved health. Though I don't use the product myself, I am confident in its obvious benefits and lack of harmful effects when used by adults.

Compared to other forms of agriculture in Okanogan, cannabis produces high value from a tiny area of land, uses a very small amount of water and little or no chemical sprays, certainly much less than used in other agriculture here. A small number of farms use supplemental lights in greenhouses during the winter and early part of the season. Most, including mine, do not have any outside lighting. This farming is labor intensive so there are people working on the farms. There are a lot of dirt roads in this county especially around new agriculture projects so there can be dust stirred up by those employees. Dust control can be an issue because of the success and positive impact of those new jobs. Most forms of agriculture involves much more land and creates much more dust than cannabis growing does. The crop, like many flowers, produces a distinctive aroma when ripe. However, it is not particularly strong or objectionable and certainly less offensive than "baby's

breath" or cattle manure or the sprays used on orchards. I encourage you to visit any of the farms in the area to experience this. Cannabis doesn't need wind machines at 4 AM or "cherry bombs". It doesn't contaminate the air or ground water leading to the excessive health problems characteristic of agricultural areas. There are no big tractor drawn spray machines on cannabis farms. In our farm we use no chemicals on the plants and only natural fertilizer and compost in the soil.

There seems to be a misguided effort to create a distinction between "hemp" and "marijuana". Both are cannabis plants indistinguishable in form. Many "marijuana" strains, such as the high CBD "medical" strains including "Charlotte's Web" used to treat seizure disorder, are actually forms of hemp or crosses between common hemp and marijuana strains. We produce those "medical" strains alongside our high THC strains. Hemp looks the same, grows the same, smells the same and is a form of cannabis which easily crosses with any other cannabis strain. The difference is that hemp raised for fiber or CBD extraction can be either male or female while cannabis raised for THC is only grown for the unfertilized female blossom. Airborne hemp pollen also pollinates all other cannabis strains so is incompatible with raising other forms of cannabis within an area of at least ten miles, probably more in the windy Okanogan Valley.

All cultivation of cannabis, including hemp and the other strains, is agriculture. There is talk of classifying cannabis as "industrial" for the purpose of county zoning. The state statute used the industrial classification to avoid applying agricultural subsidy and tax breaks intended to help Washington state ag products to compete with out of state production, which consideration does not now apply to cannabis. That was a quick patch to fix tax laws for the new I-502 business. But there is no such rationale for the county to classify it as "industrial". The county can't be "arbitrary and capricious". It is irrational to classify a clear example of basic agriculture as industrial or other than agriculture. You can't make a cow a duck simply by naming it a duck. Growing cannabis, especially as done in Okanogan county by planting in the soil under the sun, is always agriculture and deserves, as the most valuable form of agriculture in the county, to be classified that way and treated as such.

King 5 TV News has video of Commissioner Jim Detro saying in the fall of 2014 that marijuana production in Okanogan County has been our biggest cash crop for over twenty years. Now it is legal and regulated and we should embrace it as the huge benefit to our county that it really is. I, for one, am ready to see Okanogan County finally benefit from this new ag business.

The moratorium should be withdrawn immediately, cannabis cultivation should be classified as agriculture (its not a duck) and members of the I-502 producers should be included in the process of revising zoning ordinances.

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