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Of the News-Register

CARLTON — The city is considering an ordinance designed to protect both the grower and the public in the legal growing of medical marijuana.

“This is not to take away anyone’s right,” said Mayor Kathie Oriet. It is, she said, “designed to put security and safeguards on growers and make sure it’s where kids can’t get to it.”

State law allows people with a medical marijuana card to grow a limited number of plants for personal use. It also regulates growers who produce medical marijuana for users.

Carlton’s proposed ordinance — which city attorney Walt Gowell likened to electrical and plumbing codes — would spell out where and how approved growers could cultivate their crop. It would ensure that grow light installations weren’t fire hazards, for instance, and would require plants to remain in a secure structure out of sight and reach of children.

Last year, a local resident was growing medical marijuana in his yard, a council member said. Neighbors complained about the smell, as well as the potential for his plot to become an attractive nuisance.

Under the ordinance, growers would need to register with the city. No fee would be assessed, but they would be subject to an on-site inspection by police or a building inspector.

Councilors took a look at the proposal Monday night, then decided to schedule a public hearing for Monday, March 12, to allow additional comment. A public hearing is not required, City Manager Chad Olsen said, but “Given the nature of the ordinance, it’s a good idea.”

Two members of the public asked numerous questions during the council’s Monday discussion. Councilors said they welcomed the input and asked them to take a deeper look at the proposal and offer more suggestions.

One said he was concerned that forcing growers to register with the city would invade users’ privacy.

The other noted the proposal refers to curbing any noxious odors or other byproducts that might adversely affect the health or safety of nearby residents.

He wondered about use of fertilizer on farms and how “odor” would be defined and by whom. To him, he said, marijuana smells much better than animal waste.

One section of the ordinance establishes requirements for rooms in which marijuana may be grown. “How is that protecting the grower?” one of the men asked.

The mayor explained that the ordinance aims to encourage residents to maintain livable homes. If someone lived in a three-bedroom house, for instance, he could use one bedroom for a medical marijuana grow while maintaining the others as bedrooms.

The man persisted, “What if I lived alone in a four-bedroom house. Could I use three bedrooms for growing marijuana?”

For more information, call Carlton City Hall at 503-852-7575.