Yolo County moving toward cannabis vote in June
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In perhaps the shortest cannabis discussion in the past year, Yolo County Supervisors pushed toward the cannabis tax vote with little friction Tuesday.

The item passed through the Supervisors' chamber faster than ever before, perhaps suggesting that cannabis advocates and officials are reaching common ground when it comes to growing the plant.

The cannabis tax measure will go before the public in early June, and will require a majority vote to pass. Money collected from the tax will go toward the county's general fund.

County staff has drawn up a plan that will take a 4 percent cut of cultivators' gross receipts and a 5 percent cut of commercial gross receipts. On a yearly basis, supervisors can raise or lower that tax by 2 percent to fit the market, but cannot exceed the range of 1-15 percent. The tax applies to each cannabis cultivation license.

Based on Tuesday's discussion, growers are by and large satisfied with the tax measure. Yolo Cannabis Coalition advocates Lorne Silverstein and Daniel Connoly expressed their support and commended the efforts of everyone involved.

"There's light at the end of this tunnel," Silverstein said after a brief public comment.

The future of cannabis cultivation in Yolo will also use development agreements; the county hired an outside consultant, Heidi Tschudin, to help design the potential alternative to the tax measure.

In a past meeting, Tschudin compared the cannabis industry to some from the past.

She explained that a development agreement between Yolo County and gravel miners operating near the Capay Valley and Esparto dug up something of a happy ending to "gravel wars" in past decades. The county had "net gains" by allowing a limited amount of gravel mining, as those companies kept up parks and roadways near their mining sites.

She went on describing similarities between the mining and cannabis industries, but concluded that there may be too many growers for the county to hash out individual agreements.

With this in mind, supervisors have considered development agreements, which would allow growers and the county to form agreements beyond the tax measure. It would also put grow sites through environmental reviews that would glean input from neighboring properties.

These agreements would likely apply to indoor grows with odor-mitigating circulation systems — these sites require major investment and growers would want a long-term contract with the county to build on solid ground.

Supervisors still have not allocated where they intend to place cannabis tax funds, but they have suggested the money could go toward “early childhood intervention and prevention” regarding the plant.

Chair Oscar Villegas warned that the market is still fluctuating, and that the county would need to “walk before it can run.”

“I’m less worried about what we’re going to spend it on,” he said. “We can’t assume that’s the revenue that we have forever.”

Supervisors pushed the motion through with District 3 Supervisor Matt Rexroad opposed. Rexroad has stood against the tax measure since its inception, instead hoping to allow the market to police itself.

Villegas closed the discussion, saying: “Over the last course of the last year and a half, we’ve come a long way.”