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MS. PATTERSON: We're going to Item 9C. While we're clearing the room, there are a number of public speakers on this item as well. I believe most of them remain here.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: Let's just stand by until we get the room cleared and --

MS. PATTERSON: Yep.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: I ask if you were here for this last vote, please clear the room. We still have a lot of business to get to. So if you're wearing a green or red shirt and you're done with this one, please exit. Thank you very much.

Item #9C

ODINANCE 2023-15: THE BOARD CONSIDER ENACTING AN ORDINANCE BANNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OR LOCATION OF MEDICAL MARIJUANA TREATMENT CENTER DISPENSING FACILITIES WITHIN UNINCORPORATED COLLIER COUNTY.

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Okay. County Manager, let's move to 9C.

MS. PATTERSON: Item 9C is a recommendation that the Board consider enacting an ordinance banning the establishment or location of medical marijuana treatment center dispensing facilities within unincorporated Collier County. This is at the Board's direction. It's been advertised based on Board direction from the last meeting. This is -- the County Attorney has prepared this item, and we do have public speakers.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: Mr. Miller?

MR. MILLER: I'm so sorry, sir. I was being -- I did not hear what you were requesting. Are you ready for speakers?

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CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: We are.

MS. PATTERSON: Number of public speakers, Troy, please.

MR. MILLER: We have 17.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: Okay. Big issue.

MR. MILLER: I'm told they're not all here, though.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: Okay. Well, let's get started with the first person who is here.

MR. MILLER: Harold J. Minch. Mr. Minch?

COMMISSIONER McDANIEL: Harold's not here.

MR. MILLER: All right. Kathy Lowers -- Lowers. And Kathy's been ceded three additional minutes from Maggie.

MS. van PARYS: But they're upstairs --

MR. MILLER: There's no one upstairs, ma'am.

MS. van PARYS: -- upstairs, fifth floor.

MR. MILLER: They're not up there now.

MS. LOWERS: I think Harold left, and he was going to come back.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: Go ahead, ma'am.

MR. MILLER: But you had three additional minutes, correct, ma'am?

MS. LOWERS: Yes, I do.

MR. MILLER: And the person that ceded them -- Maggie yeah, she's here. I'm sorry. Go ahead, ma'am.

MS. LOWERS: Some of you know me from Southwest Florida Christian, which is a coalition of Catholic and Protestants who work on elections. And also -- and our main goal is to keep our area family friendly. Some of you know me from Preserve Paradise, which is a group of doctors, mental health advocates, and those who work in addiction recovery, and we also want to keep Collier low drug.

So I want to thank you for proposing a ban on these pot shops.

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You have the best-of-both-world compromise. People get it at their home if they want to use it. And just a point of correction, they don't get it mailed to them. They get it through courier, okay.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: Delivered.

MS. LOWERS: Because you can't mail it through the mail. So -- but they all get it within 24 hours right to their doorstep.

And, also, we keep the pot shops out, because studies show that youth will increase -- use will increase when there's pot shops and billboards in an area.

I will say that I'm a mom of three teens and three kids in their early 20s, and this to them is what big alcohol and big tobacco was to our generation. So big marijuana is a multi-billion-dollar business that has targeted our youth, and their business model is to get everybody on the high THC. So a lot of baby boomers, especially, think we're talking about the 1 to 3 percent THC that was available when they were younger, but now we're up-to-100 percent THC.

I have gone undercover, and so has a lot of us in the drug-free community, to these marijuana shops, and they sell all the up-to-100 percent THC joints and vapes that are 80 percent, and all kinds of dab, cramble -- crumble, shatter, all that was sold on the street.

So I'm from -- I was born in Florida, but I did live through it in California. In 1996, George Soros had had the first medical marijuana ballot initiative, and he has supported every one since. That is the loose ones. And he's supported the Florida one also financially.

And what they do is they bring in these pot shops, they sell the drug dealer pot up to 100 percent THC. You don't get -- because it's illegal federally, there is not a prescription. It's a card that's -- basically, you get a card to go shopping with.

And then next, they legalize it saying you have to regulate it like

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alcohol. But they saw in California in the summer, they couldn't even put warning labels, and we've had this since 1996 in California.

We have massive homelessness that resulted. And 90 percent of all the pot grown and sold in California is now done by the cartels. Same with Massachusetts and other states that were early legalizers in one form or another, because that is the model. The medical marijuana kind of gets the customers for them. Then the cartels take over. And what we have seen is just -- Seattle, Portland, San Francisco. They're cesspools now. And we don't want that here. We don't want the visible drug culture here.

And, you know, I'm a Christian, and Jesus said look at the fruit of something. You have to look and examine these areas that have had this and what they result in.

Okay. And I have no personal animus against Nick Garulay, the pot lobbyist who's sitting over there with his staff. But the point is, you guys have to protect our quality of life versus the profiteers. We are the citizens. They're getting -- the people are getting it at their house anyway. There's no reason to put those pot shops here.

And, you know, they are going to say we want the same rights as pharmacies. First of all, it's illegal federally. Second of all, their product by peer review study shows a very serious link to suicide, psychosis, et cetera, a lot of death associated with that. Yes, you can't sit there and overdose probably on THC; it's very hard. But the death comes through other ways. Just like with cigarettes for the prior generations, the death came through other ways.

And so we don't want this here. And I would just say that we have record mental illness, record psychosis, record suicide. We don't want to be Guinea pigs in this massive social experiment. And the biggest reason is you don't have local control over these shops, okay. And local control is how you maintain the culture of your county, because you can't control the number of them. You can't

control the products they sell. And all these people are profiteers. They want to push this product out.

And in California, we have more pot shops than all the fast foods combined. They're everywhere, okay. And it -- has things gotten better there? No, they were worse.

So people move here because it's low crime and it's low drugs. It's family friendly. And that's why I moved here. I remember coming here from California saying to my husband, there's no pot shops. There's no drug symbols everywhere. It's so amazing. It's like a land lost in time. It's like small-town culture. I love it. And that's why we came here. So many families feel like I do, so I just want to thank you for doing that. And appreciate that. Thanks.

MR. MILLER: Your next speaker is Leroy Chamnes. He will be followed by Kendra Fox.

MR. CHAMNES: Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to come and speak to you.

The following data is from the National Institute of Drug Abuse website. The National Institute of Drug Abuse is a federal research initiative institute and the world's largest funder of biomedical research on drug abuse and addiction. It is one of the 27 institutes and centers that comprise the National Institute of Health and is a part of the Department of -- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Listed on their website are these adverse consequences from marijuana use. First consequences are called acute present during an intoxication: Impaired short-term memory, impaired attention, judgment, and other cognitive functions, impaired coordination and balance, increased heart rate, anxiety and paranoia, psychosis. Though uncommon, it can occur.

After that are listed the persistent or long -- lasting longer than intoxication but may not be permanent. Impaired learning and

coordination and sleep problems.

Finally, it lists long-term problems. Cumulative effects of repeated use: Potential for marijuana addiction, impairments in learning and memory and potential loss of IQ among individuals with persistent marijuana use disorder who began using heavily during adolescence, increased risk of chronic cough and bronchitis, increased risk of other drug and alcohol disorders, increased risk of schizophrenia and peaceable with genetic vulnerability. These are often reported co-occurring symptoms/disorders with chronic marijuana use; however, research has not yet determined whether marijuana is causal or just associated with these mental problems.

One of the basic principles of economics is that which you incentivize and make more available. You get more of it produced and purchased and consumed in society.

If you approve this request for marijuana distribution, you will get more of it on the streets and more of it consumed. Right along with it, you will get an increase in the problems listed above.

I implore you to vote no on this proposal and to allow the easy sale -- and not allow the easy sale and distribution of this harmful substance in Collier County.

Today we sat through a long discussion of how to increase mental health benefits. If we approve this, you would get a lot more people needing that kind of care because that is one of the effects of long-term marijuana use.

Thank you.

MR. MILLER: Your next speaker is Kendra Fox. She'll be followed by Diane van Parys.

I don't see Kendra.

Diane, I know -- I think I see you -- yes. I did see you behind her. Followed by Steven Brooder.

MS. van PARYS: Okay. Thank you, Commissioner LoCastro

and all the commissioners. I am here representing Preserve Paradise, and I want to thank you for the ban that you have established that you are going to be voting on today.

The main thing is that you have said you want to preserve the health, safety, and welfare of all citizens of Collier County, and this ban will do that.

I want to give you some statistics, because it's important to know. First of all, I have compassion and we all have compassion for any one of the 32,000-plus card carrying members of medical marijuana in Collier County. We have almost 800,000 card-carrying members in the state of Florida. And we have compassion for that. And as we've clarified earlier and we continue to clarify, delivery is available to every single household card-carrying member, whether it's a caregiver to receive it or the individual patient to receive it. Delivery is available, and the delivery training is actually more encompassing than the physician training of two hours, of which we have over 40 medical doctors in Collier County that can issue the cards.

And so that training is covered. The way that the medical marijuana is dispensed, in a trunk, through a certain case, all of that is clarified. And the state of Florida has complete control over that in terms of the rules.

The other thing I wanted to mention is the Department of Health has the official marijuana medical use, and they do a weekly report on the medical marijuana. And I'm going to get to that in one second. Let me just find it. They do a weekly report. And I can tell you right now with our 800,000 card-carrying members, the usage of milligrams of medical marijuana averages out to 326 MSGs per week per person that has a card. So it's quite a lot. And it's also controlled in terms of on the report every single week anybody that has a card can see how much they've used. If police are going to

pull over, they have access to that, and they're able to do it.

So we have compassion for those that use it, and we want the ban to stay in Florida -- in Collier County to preserve paradise and for the safety, welfare, and benefit of all of our citizens.

Thank you.

MR. MILLER: Your next speaker is Steven Brooder, followed by Erich Weimann.

MR. BROODER: Thank you, Commissioners. It's been a long day. I'll be brief and try not to repeat anything. Again, I'm Steve Brooder with St. Matthew's House. And I'm here today to express our opposition to lifting the ban on medical -- on marijuana dispensaries.

The DEA, as you probably know, classifies marijuana as a Schedule 1 drug. That's the same as heroin, LSD, extasy. And the DEA says it's likely to be abused and is lacking in medical value.

The FDA has only approved marijuana for treatment of two rare and severe forms of epilepsy. The use of marijuana for other conditions is not yet proven, and it's important to note that the FDA does not oversee medical marijuana like it does other prescription drugs.

It's my understanding that if a Florida county allows marijuana dispensaries, they lose control. That means that you lose control over the amount of THC in the product. You lose control over the number of outlets; that wouldn't be capped. You lose control over the marketing and advertising. And from first-hand testimonies, the marijuana purchaser is not asked about any medical condition. There's no blood test or other medical inquiry.

It's the THC in marijuana that produces the feeling that people, when they smoke or consume marijuana, get. THC acts on specific brain receptors. Marijuana overactivates the parts of the brain that contain the highest number of these receptors.



Today the average content of THC sold in marijuana that is being dispensed is 14 to 16 percent. Years ago and decades ago it was 2 or 3 percent. And we have some -- we've seen some products contain 30 percent, as much as 80 percent. Some vaping, edibles, gummies, wax can contain 10,000 THC.

Consuming high levels of THC put people at higher risk of triggering psychotic episodes and becoming addicted, and you heard the previous speaker talk about that.

Along with an addiction, cannabis use disorder is a real thing. There's many side effects, including the altered states, psychosis, impaired memory, and so on.

St. Matthew's House operates the only long-term residential recovery program in Collier County, and we see in our intake process about 80 percent of the people that come to our program for drug recovery report using marijuana. That's the gateway drug. Research shows that children living near marijuana dispensaries -- I want to make sure I pointed this out -- are more likely to use marijuana and drugs, and the density of these shops and the delivery services was positively correlated with a frequency of child abuse and neglect.

So with that, I, again, want to just urge you to not lift the ban on these marijuana dispensaries. Thank you.

MR. MILLER: Your next speaker is Erich Weimann. He'll be followed by -- geez -- I'm sorry. It's either Joy or Joe Maines.

MR. MAINES: Jon.

MR. MILLER: Okay. It's either Joy or Joe or Jon Maines.

MR. MAINES: My third-grade penmanship.

MR. WEIMANN: Hi. My name's Eric Weimann. I want to thank you guys for passing this ban on the marijuana dispensaries. This will greatly help, in my opinion, the important work that Matthew's House does, and I would like to quote a few statistics.

Child deaths. Marijuana is the number-one substance found in caregivers involving the death of a child per state health records, in Florida, Texas, and Arizona, far more than alcohol.

Statistic No. 2, suicide. Suicide is the number-one cause of death for youths in age 10 to 18 in Colorado. The number-one substance found in their toxicology reports are THC, not alcohol.

In 2017, the National Academy of Medicine issued a 468-page research report entitled, "The Health Effects of Cannabis and Cannabinoids." Their report is the gold standard of scientific research and medical practice in the United States. The reports are peer reviewed. The committee examined thousands of studies and papers, careful not to overstate evidence in either direction.

To produce the cannabis report, 16 professors and doctors worked with a staff of over 13 for more than a year. The key finding, I will quote, there is substantial evidence of a statistical association between cannabis use and the development of schizophrenia and other psychosis with the highest risk amongst -- highest risk among the most frequent users.

The current Colorado governor in 2021 signed a marijuana bill, House Bill 1317. The key provision of the bill was the fund studies on the research of marijuana's impact on mental health. Specifically, to increase the understanding on how high potency, which is what we're talking about here, high THC products, impacting the developing brain. It's an interesting factoid, even though 65 percent of the counties in Colorado opted out of this. There's more dispensaries than there are Starbucks, McDonald's, and 7-Elevens combined.

Lastly, in 1979, Keith Stroup, prominent marijuana advocate, head of the National Organization for Reform Marijuana Laws in 1979, he said, quote, marijuana medical marijuana is the red herring to help usher in legalized marijuana.

Thank you very much.

MR. MILLER: Your next speaker is Jon Maines. He'll be followed by Cathy Maines.

MR. MAINES: Before I get started, Sheriff Rambosk caught me out in the hall and ask -- he said he submitted a letter. Can I read it without using my time, or can somebody from --

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: Why don't you just submit the letter to the County Manager or to --

MR. MAINES: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: And we can make copies of that and give it to all the commissioners so we could have the original. We haven't seen it.

MR. MAINES: My name's Jon Maines. I'm a Collier County resident of 34 years. I'm a retired Naples police lieutenant. And I wanted to give a shout-out to Sheriff Rambosk, Colonel Bloom for the great job their team has done making Collier County one of the safest, if not the safest county in the United States to live in.

And from there, I'll go to the city of Seattle. Veora Little, I think, sent all of you a podcast or a documentary called "Seattle is Dying." I'm going to summarize that real quickly and add a couple of other comments, then I'll finish up.

Seattle passed medical-use marijuana in 1998, along with the dispensaries, or State of Washington I should say. From 1998 to 2012, law enforcement took a gradually more hands-off approach with enforcement of marijuana laws just for a variety of reasons, but the first one that pops in my mind is because they probably couldn't differentiate who had the right to it, who didn't have a right to it.

In 2012, the State of Washington passed recreational-use marijuana. From 2012 to 2016, their homeless population shot up to 10,614 people, according to this documentary. And 100 percent of those people that are living on the streets of Seattle in tents laying in

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amongst hypodermic needles, human waste, 100 percent of them are addicted to drugs.

The City of Seattle spends roughly \$1 billion a year dealing with homelessness and drug addiction. So today it was very appropriate, listening to the planning that you're looking at doing with the David Lawrence Center and where you're going to wrestle to put it, and we're talking 25 million. Imagine if you had to budget \$1 billion, because I can tell you, Naples, as you know, is a lot warmer in January, February, and March than Seattle living on the street. We're going to get all the people from Atlanta, Chicago, this side of the Mississippi coming down to Florida, and a lot of them will come to Naples.

From there, I would just share this: The amount of resources that's going to be needed to deal with if we pass recreational use here in a couple years is going to be -- we're not going to be able to handle it. We're going to be just like Seattle.

And I was a police officer for over 20 years, and I can tell you, the City of Naples used to be, I don't know if it still is, divided into five geographic areas. If you had a call of a homeless person who was on drugs up in, say, the Fresh Market in Parkshore, it would take two officers in the northern part of the city to handle that. Meanwhile, if somebody's having -- a baby's choking, somebody's having a heart attack or a stroke, there's nobody to send except a guy that's a lot further away, and there's a good chance that an outcome isn't going to be good for that.

So I would just end on this saying, let's not snatch defeat out of the jaws of victory here. We've got a great place to live. We don't need 10,000 people being homeless on our streets and, if you do, you're going to need 103 of those David Lawrence Centers.

Thank you.

MR. MILLER: Your next speaker is Kathy Maines. She'll be

followed by Leonard Rutkowski. I hope I'm saying that right.

DR. RUTKOWSKI: On target.

MS. MAINES: Good evening. My name is Kathy Maines. I've been a pharmacist for over 30 years here in Collier County. How fitting it was today that the challenge of mental health was discussed. One of the speakers for the newly proposed facility stated that mental health needs have quadrupled. Wow, that's amazing. But we do not need any increase in marijuana availability to add to this problem in our area.

I actually wanted to come today because I wanted to thank you and express my gratitude to the Board for the proposed ordinance for banning the medical marijuana dispensaries. On behalf of myself and Veora Little -- who could not be here. I know she spoke in front of you before. She's a certified registered nurse anesthetist. It is our mission to always act in the best interest of public health, safety, and of welfare our community. We feel strongly that this vote against the medical marijuana dispensaries will keep Collier County beautiful and a desired vacation destination.

Again, thank you for preserving paradise.

MR. MILLER: Your next speaker is Leonard Rutkowski. He'll be followed by Josephine Canella-Krehl.

DR. RUTKOWSKI: Three minutes short, but good evening. My -- I'm Leonard Rutkowski. I'm an M.D. My position here is as a retired neurosurgeon who has an active DEA license for over 50 years.

With that information, it gives me significant volume of experience and expertise. The combination, therefore, allows me a unique perspective. My whole career was reduced -- was aimed at reducing pain and suffering.

There are facts and reality that I will bring to the forum, all the comments that will be defensible and verifiable with the medical

literature and published verified statistics.

One, there is essentially no doctor-patient relationship. A paid incentivized doctor answers a phone call and gets essential minimal -- essentially, minimal information. This starts the process to get a medical marijuana card.

There is no review of systems, which is a questioning of medical information like cardiac, pulmonary, gastrointestinal history, along with a surgical and allergy history, all important information necessary to safely administer treatment. Without getting such information would be considered malpractice across the whole country.

These so-called doctors have sold their ethics for a few Roman silver and gold coins. If calls are denied, I suspect that they would not have a job the next day.

With Delta 8 now being sold in Collier County, there's a direct approach to circumvent the situation to provide THC-type treatment -- product to the public. This provides evidence that the major motivation is money and greed. This product has a potential to be more dangerous than true -- THC, and I have the information here from the addiction group.

I have no qualms about CBD, but THC has now a significantly higher -- potency is potentially, if not already, a dark path untested by legitimate researchers.

Common misconceptions fostered by the marijuana cabal about seizures, which has been addressed; I won't address that anymore. Marijuana is not a gateway drug; another absolutely false statement.

Next, marijuana is innocuous. Teenage psychosis, again, related by previous testifiers.

Marijuana has not killed anyone by virtue of an overdose. True statement. Indirectly, though, car accidents and combination with other drugs, cocaine, heroin, alcohol, et cetera, has been associated

with deaths, period.

The fact that marijuana can treat cancer, HIV/AIDS, Crohn's, and whatever, no such medical studies that I have ever seen prove that -- only anecdotal reports. Anecdotal reports are not medical evidence. Corruption in the scientific community, including physicians along with the media, not only their drug -- not only doing their due diligence and a significant influence of millions of dollars and individuals whose main goal is to generate money and ignore the overall greater good for society has led to this point.

I just had one more sentence.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: Go ahead, Doc.

DR. RUTKOWSKI: My major motivation is to protect my grandchild and to make aware to society the pitfalls of false and exaggerated statements from individuals who say they are concerned about patients' well-being but, in fact, are falsely compassionate. I have no financial interest in marijuana at all.

Thank you.

MR. MILLER: Your next speaker is Josephine Canella-Krehl.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: She's not here.

MR. MILLER: She is not here.

Joe Alger?

(No response.)

MR. MILLER: Okay. Nick Garulay. And Nick had some time ceded. Jae Chipps?

(Raises hand.)

MR. MILLER: She's there.

Johanna Taylor?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: She had to leave.

MR. MILLER: So, Nick, you'll have a total of six minutes.

MR. GARULAY: Where's the monitor?

MR. MILLER: The visualizer? You want to put your iPad

under that; is that correct, sir?

MR. GARULAY: Would that be under here like this?

MR. MILLER: Yes.

MR. GARULAY: Deep breaths. Yeah, my name's Nick Garulay, founder and CEO of My Florida Green. I've been established in the medical marijuana space since November of 2016 when marijuana first passed. So I've been in it since the beginning. I stood here and spoke before a couple of you back in '17 and listened to a doctor who was the head of NCH at the time say that marijuana has absolutely no medicinal benefits whatsoever. Boy, have we evolved since then.

We have 35,000 patients on our platform, which is what I'm showing you here. And in order to become certified, at least with My Florida Green, you need to fill out a medical application, the doctor needs to approve it, and you need to schedule.

So we document everything, and I do it on purpose for this type of meeting. I'm hoping that I can actually -- okay, here we go. So we document all the drugs -- the prescription drugs that people are taking when they come in, and then we document all the prescription drugs that people are able to reduce the need for, okay.

And we also track patient retention, and we also track patients' satisfaction. We also track the age and demographic. Our most prominent referral is other physicians. Physicians refer their patients to us. Even the physicians that are practicing medical marijuana here in Naples actually refer their patients to us, because they want to make sure that they're properly educated. Education's a very big thing for us.

By the way, debunking a couple of things. There's no such thing as 100 percent THC products. That's absolutely nonsense. They're not 100 percent at all. THC is a psychotropic part of the plant and, yes, it does create a psychotropic effect, but there's also



other cannabinoids of the plant that are extremely medicinal. CBD is the most medicinal cannabinoid of the plant.

I heard a couple things -- and I'm going to try to talk fast so I can get it all in -- which were a little disturbing. We talked about how Collier County is wanting control. It's already out of control, ladies and gentlemen. Every vape store, head shop, gas station, liquor store, and kava bar are already selling THC infused products.

MS. LOWERS: You sell it, too.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: Hey, hey. Excuse me.

MR. GARULAY: Wow, that was a little disrespectful.

(Audience interruption.)

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: Ma'am, ma'am.

MR. GARULAY: Wow, that's --

COMMISSIONER McDANIEL: That's totally uncalled for.

MR. GARULAY: Okay. Well, hopefully I could get a couple more seconds added.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: Nick, wait, wait. Stop for one second.

Ma'am, you do that again, we're going to have you escorted out of here. We're trying to keep it professional, okay.

MR. MILLER: The clock was paused.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: Go ahead, sir.

MR. GARULAY: Thank you. Wow.

So, yeah, my 15-year-old went into a kava bar here in Naples a couple of months ago and actually bought a THC-infused products, two drinks, THC-infused liquor and came home, and he was baked out of his mind. I actually filed a police report with the Collier County Sheriffs. I heard nothing about it. I totally roasted them on social media and got a ton of blowback and negative review.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: Mr. Garulay, you speak like I do, fast, and Terri -- it's getting towards the end of the day here. So

we've had a lot of speakers. Just slow down, and -- we want to hear you.

MR. GARULAY: I'm sorry. I'm trying to get it all in.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: And we're going to let you get it in.

(Simultaneous crosstalk.)

MR. GARULAY: Sorry. So the cannabis products are completely out of control right now. People are selling un -- non-lab-tested products.

With medical dispensaries opening in Naples, what would happen is they would sell lab-tested medical products for patients who are suffering from debilitating conditions. And, yes, I do sell products at my place. I sell products that I formulate personally and they're manufactured for -- in a GMP lab, they are lab tested, and they are specifically formulated for specific products. The number-one product is for -- caters to sleep. I'm not sure if any of you sleep well in this room, but I know there's many that don't.

A couple things -- a couple more things I want to show you here.

COMMISSIONER McDANIEL: I think we have a microphone, don't we?

MR. MILLER: There's a wireless microphone. You've got to turn it on.

MR. GARULAY: All right.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: While you're finding your spot there, let me just ask you a question, just for clarification. I mean, I've been to your --

MR. GARULAY: Testing, testing.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: I've been to your business and, you know, and spent several hours there watching the operation. What's the difference between what -- so we haven't -- we don't have dispensaries in Collier County except for one in my district which is

on Marco, and Marco City Council passed that.

But what's -- since we have a ban on dispensaries here, what's the difference between your product and what's in Lee County across the line in an actual dispensary?

MR. GARULAY: Derived from hemp, sir. So hemp is a plant similar to cannabis, but it yields higher CBD and lower THC where cannabis will yield higher THC and lower CBD. Hemp is actually -- Trump signed a bill into law in 2018 making all parts of the plant legal, which actually creates a little bit of a loophole and why you have all these little shops, pot shops, per se, that are already open in Collier but they're, you know, selling chemically modified THC products that are modified from hemp.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: So none of your products in your store are derived from the actual marijuana leaves?

MR. GARULAY: No, sir. That would be illegal.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: It's derived from hemp, but it still has a THC component that comes out of hemp?

MR. GARULAY: Yes, sir, yes, sir, which is legal to sell.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: I mean, the reason I'm asking that is -- well, I spent time in your store, so I remember those answers, but so we're getting sort of conflicting --

(Simultaneous crosstalk.)

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: So I want to give you a chance to clarify.

MR. GARULAY: What I also find interesting is we're comparing the blue states, the poorly run blue states who passed recreational marijuana. Look, we have 35,000 patients on our platform. I do not support recreational marijuana. I want nothing to do with recreational marijuana. I have documented incredible miracles on a daily basis.

The data I'm going to show you right here, out of 35,000

patients, the one in blue, okay -- this one doesn't really work. Okay. Here we go.

The one in blue off to the left, out of 35,000 patients, almost 20,000 patients have gotten off of prescription medications using our product, okay. That's 65 percent.

I put Xanax in here as an example. I built a drug database on my platform. In the last seven months, 1,944 -- 1,944 patients have gotten off of Xanax using our platform, all right.

We're changing the world. We're changing this community for the better. We're getting people off of prescription drugs. Forty-five percent of our patients get off of alcohol, all right. Anybody ever -- anybody ever made a good decision drunk? I know I haven't, right? Maybe you don't make a decision stoned, but that's -- at least it wasn't a bad one.

All right. All right. How many people are -- and I'm not going to -- I don't -- I don't want a show of hands -- and yes, I'll talk to you guys. I'm sorry about talking to the room.

But how many people are taking medications they want to get off of? How many people are taking medications with side effects that they don't -- they don't welcome, right?

This is a natural alternative that's never killed anyone in history. We've established that. All right. We've established this has never killed anyone in history, all right.

Something else I want to show you all. Sorry if I'm a little agitated. I've been sitting here since 8:30 in the morning, as you all, have, too, so -- all right. Eighty-five percent of our patients have a successful outcome by incorporating cannabis into their everyday life. You can't stand up here and show me any data from a drug that can yield that kind of result.

In the past since we --

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: Let me just ask you a question for

clarification.

MR. GARULAY: Sure.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: So you said 85 percent of your -- of your patients have had a positive result of cannabis or -- right.

MR. GARULAY: To treat their debilitating condition.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: So what you're saying is, they haven't -- all the stats that show the success isn't from the non-marijuana product you sell?

MR. GARULAY: Correct.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: You give them sort of an alternative that's local here, but a large portion of your customer base crosses the county line or goes to Marco and you measure --

MR. GARULAY: Most of them.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: -- and you add that to you metrics?

MR. GARULAY: No, no all this data --

THE COURT REPORTER: Sir, excuse me. I can only get one person at a time.

MR. GARULAY: Sorry.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: Okay. Wait. Just let me finish. So -- well, I think you heard my question, so I won't repeat it. So I'll let you answer. Go ahead.

MR. GARULAY: The data that I'm showing you is for medical marijuana patients. I'm sorry. I should have clarified that at the beginning. This has nothing to do with my product.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: And that's not what you sell. So you're educating us here on medical marijuana, not --

MR. GARULAY: That is correct.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: I guess my question is, if your product in your non-dispensary store has so much positive result and you don't want to be in the recreational marijuana business, but

maybe you want to be in the medical marijuana business -- but if you're having so much success in your non-dispensary store, then why are you on the side of wanting more dispensaries in Collier County?

MR. GARULAY: I think we're crossing. We're crossing. The woman that screamed out, you know, is sort of a whole different tangent that they shouldn't have gone down.

We facilitate the medical marijuana certification for both the patient and the doctor. A doctor works with us full time. There's 32,000 patients in Collier County, right? We've done 22,000 of them, all right. So that's two-thirds of the market, all right. We have the market here.

I have no financial benefit if a dispensary opens up in Collier County. The only reason why I stand here is to correct ignorant statements that are being stated. That's really it. I have no motivation other than our patients who work hard to live here in Collier County deserve to have access in the county that they --

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: You helped 22,000 patients get medical marijuana cards that cross the county line to get it or they go to Marco, but then they also still frequent your store because you also sell a product that helps them?

MR. GARULAY: They have to see us every seven months per state law, every 210 days. They have to see the doctor every seven months to document their --

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: And a lot of them don't buy product from you because they need the medical marijuana so --  
(Simultaneous crosstalk.)

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: -- they cross, but you help --  
(Simultaneous crosstalk.)

MR. GARULAY: Yeah, we offer CBD.

Look, I can show you -- look, what -- with the stat that's up here,

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here's 3,400 patients who have gotten off of benzos. That's 26 -- that's 2,600 roughly that have gotten off of opioids, all right. These are our patients on the My Florida Green platform that have reported they've gotten off of opioids and gotten off of benzos. I have tons of other stats I can show you. Again, there's 85 percent success ratio.

Most people are complaining from sleep, right? We have an 85 percent success ratio of people sleeping better, lowering their anxiety, you know, improving their quality of life.

So I don't want to sit here and listen to marijuana be bastardized by all this data that people are pulling off of Google or NCBI.gov, which we've all discussed all day today, which is corrupt data, right? I'm showing you real data.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: Can you summarize, because we're well over -- and I ate up some of that time, but --

MR. GARULAY: No problem, and I appreciate it.

And, look, out of the 22,000 patients, 3,000 of them are veterans. We charge veterans once and never again. We give law enforcement 50 percent off, right? Much respect. Thank you for your service, Mr. Kowal and Mr. LoCastro. Thank you for all you guys' service. Any of you who want to come into my store and see this data, any of you want to talk in the parking lot --

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: Talking to us. Talking to us. Talking to us.

MR. GARULAY: Anybody wants to talk come to our store, talk to us in the parking lot, in the hallway and not be confrontational, I'll show you all this data. It's real. This is actual data, not some nonsense that's pulled from, you know, the Internet.

And, again, we kind of jumped around here. I didn't get to say all the things that I wanted to, but I know the decision's already made, right? I know you guys aren't going to allow a dispensary to open up

in Collier. I get it. But some of this data -- some of these things that are being presented are completely ignorant. They make absolutely no sense, and it's very disheartening for all the work that I've put in. I've spent \$1.6 million of my own money building this platform and this company, all right, and it's to change the world. It's to help these people who are suffering from debilitating conditions. So I'll leave it at that.

Any of you need help, MyFloridaGreen.com, click on "get started."

MR. MILLER: Mr. Chair, your final registered speaker on this item is Chad Taylor.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: Okay.

MR. TAYLOR: Good evening, Commissioners.

You know, I sit here today and I find it ironic that, you know, earlier this morning we used such strong words in favor of medical freedom, so much so that we returned CDC money -- and thank you all for doing that -- yet we stand here today talking about a permanent ban on medical marijuana dispensaries. It just doesn't add up.

So my name is Chad Taylor. I'm a veteran of the United States Marine Corps. I'm the general manager at My Florida Green, and I've been a patient there about the last three years.

Now, it was the unconstitutional vaccine mandates that -- perpetuated by the CDC that drove me to leave a 16-year-career and into medical marijuana. Now, the stress of my situation significantly impacted my sleep, among other things.

Now, to be clear, I've been alcohol free for nearly eight years, and drinking again was not going to be an option for me. Now, my doctor at the time, within a quick less-than-two-minute appointment, immediately prescribed Xanax and Lexapro.

Now, I quickly learned after that that both of those medications have nearly two dozen side effects, things that I wouldn't even give to



an enemy.

Now, when I returned -- when I turned to medical marijuana, and I got properly educated at My Florida Green, I have to say it was complete game changer for me. I sleep like a baby now. My anxiety's next to zero, and I have zero desire to return to alcohol. How we can call this a gateway drug is beyond my intelligence.

Now, people turn to medical marijuana when synthetic pharmaceuticals have failed them -- we have to understand that -- or, worse yet, makes their condition worse. Now, I've personally seen the relief on hundreds of patients myself.

Now, respectfully, I'd like to ask the commissioners to imagine a scenario where the tables are turned. Imagine a loved one who's suffering from a debilitating condition and the only relief they get is from medical marijuana. Now, maybe they suffer from sleeplessness because of trauma. Maybe it's they shake uncontrollably from Parkinson's, or they have horrible side effects from chemotherapy. Maybe they have chronic pain from a devastating injury, okay.

Now imagine that I tell your loved one they can drive an extra 40 miles or 40 minutes to their dispensary to get the relief that they need. It's just a minor inconvenience. It doesn't feel so good, does it? Now, that's exactly what we're doing to tens of thousands of patients right here in Naples.

Now, despite the misconceptions that are spread about medical marijuana deliveries, they are not within 24 hours, I can promise you that. Now, by creating these extra barriers, this is what's going to happen. People are going to self-medicate. They're going to do it with alcohol, they're going to do it with pills, and then, worse yet, they're going to turn to street drugs which are filled with fentanyl. None of those roads lead to good places.

Now, in the U.S. alone, 104,000 deaths occur per year due to

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alcohol. Over 68,000 deaths occur per year due to opioids. Over 110,000 deaths occur per year due to fentanyl overdoses. Zero people have ever died from a marijuana overdose, ever, in the history of mankind.

Now, in the middle of an opioid epidemic and a fentanyl crisis, we have to ask ourselves, do you want that kind of blood on your hands?

Now, an expression we live by in the Marine Corps is *semper fidelis*. That means always faithful. And I can promise you standing here right now, I will always, as a general manager of My Florida Green and as a marine, I will always stay faithful to our patients right here in Naples.

Thank you for your time, and I really hope that you can reconsider getting access --

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: So a question I have for you.

MR. TAYLOR: Yes, sir.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: The success that you've gotten over anxiety and sleep and things like that, is that 100 percent from things that you're buying at Florida Green, or you're having to cross county lines or go to Marco as well?

MR. TAYLOR: So to give you a little context, I live a very holistic lifestyle. And, again, I did leave a 16-year career over the vaccine mandates because of that. I'm 45 years old. I can do more pullups than I could do at 18 years old in the Marine Corps at boot camp, okay. So that's just a little context of my health and how I manage my health. And, absolutely, I can tell you I did not go into Xanax or Lexapro to relieve my condition. I turned to medical marijuana, and I got properly educated on it and, absolutely, it 100 percent helps me sleep, it brings down my anxiety significantly, and it helps me live a more quality life.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: So in your particular case, you're

using product at Florida Green, but then you're also having to cross either the county line or go to Marco, correct?

MR. TAYLOR: I do, and it's highly -- it's more than inconvenient, quite frankly.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: Why don't you have it delivered?

MR. TAYLOR: Delivery, it takes more than 24 hours. And also, if you're a working person, they give you -- typically you get about a 12-hour window. So I don't -- I can't do that. I have two kids. One of them is -- has autism. I'm a very busy guy, and that's just not something I can do. I literally have to drive when I need my product.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: Commissioner McDaniel.

COMMISSIONER McDANIEL: Yeah. And you bring up a good point. I just, you know -- and I just want to say, one of the downsides to the proposition of this ban -- and it's been mentioned here several times, continuing the ban. We've had a de facto ban. We have never voted. This commission has never voted to ban the dispensaries nor have we been able to secure the votes to allow the dispensaries. So we've been in a de facto ban, and that's where I'm hanging with regard to this circumstance.

One of the downsides to the ban is there will be -- people will self-medicate. There will be an increase in illegal use of consumption of marijuana, and we have a terrible issue going on in our community with fentanyl being laced with these street drugs.

What is the percentage chance of fentanyl ending up in a product that is manufactured -- and I know you can't speak for other medical marijuana/medical cannabis facilities. I'm asking him. What's the opportunity for fentanyl ending up in a product that's put forth by any of these dispensaries, specifically? You can't really speak for the others.

MR. TAYLOR: Those are medical lab-tested products.

COMMISSIONER McDANIEL: Basically, it's zero.

MR. TAYLOR: It sounds pretty zero to me.

COMMISSIONER McDANIEL: It is a highly controlled substance. The medical cannabis is controlled by its construction manufacturer of, by the State of Florida, and there is no opportunity for the other elicits to be added into it.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: Here's why I just slightly disagree with that. If I'm a person -- and I know people that are getting results from medical marijuana, so -- but we're not here to argue to be doctors and decide if medical marijuana is, you know, effective or not.

But if I'm somebody that believes it's effective and I have some serious issues, and it helps me in an exponential way, we're not keeping them from getting it. And I think if I have something that's a miracle drug, driving 40 minutes or less in most cases to either Marco or across the county line -- you know, I don't have to do it every day. I can get enough of a quantity to get it.

And so, you know, I've been, you know, on record of saying, we have the same amount of dispensaries in Collier County as we do Trader Joe's and Wholefoods, one. There's one on Marco, a dispensary on Marco, which I didn't vote for. They're a municipality, so the City Council voted. And I spent a half a day in that dispensary getting an education on how many people travel from all over Collier County. But most of them tell me they don't have to go there very often. They get enough of a supply. And it's -- and I misspoke. It's not mailed. It's delivered, because a lot of those people were older and they don't have a job, you know, like you so for them it's a convenience.

But I just think if I have an ailment and medical marijuana is helping me, you know, that much, I don't know that there needs to be one on every corner.

And so, you know, I just -- I feel like we've got the one in Marco. We've got 30-plus on the other side of the line. And people drive for two hours, like I said, to get a \$3 bottle of wine at Trader Joe's. I think if I'm taking something that solves serious pain or helps me sleep, I'll drive that far, you know, to get, you know, relief. And then, of course, my Florida Green provides legal options that aren't medical marijuana, like you said, Nick, and your business is booming. I mean, I've been there.

So, you know, that's my -- you have -- yeah, I'd love to hear your comment.

MR. TAYLOR: I completely appreciate that, Commissioner. But with all due respect, you're not folding up a wheelchair and putting it in your car. You're not shaking uncontrollably from Parkinson. You're not suffering from chemotherapy, you know, side effects.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: So you need one on every corner so somebody can walk to it or, you know?

MR. TAYLOR: I'm not saying how many we need. I'm saying that our patients that are suffering from debilitating conditions need access to it. And to -- and by putting up more barriers like making them -- making debilitating people drive another 40 minutes is unjust. And all of the conjecture we continue to hear about all of the crime and all the bad things that are going to happen, well, that's not happening. In fact, in the planning commissioner meeting, those stats were shared, and crime does not go up in areas like that. That's complete conjecture.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: And that's what I wanted -- I wasn't trying to attack you with that question. I actually wanted to hear your honest answer to that, and I appreciate it.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you. Thank you, sir.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: Commissioner Kowal, and then,

Commissioner McDaniel, you're on deck.

COMMISSIONER KOWAL: Thank you, Chairman.

I know Nick. You know, I don't -- we're not real close, but I know Nick, and I know he believes in what he does, and he -- and, you know, and in the products he produces. And he -- you know, he talks about how he helps, you know, the people out there with their addictions. And, you know -- and I think guys like you, you know, Nick and Chad, I think you guys have this -- you know, it's coming from your heart and you believe in what you're doing and the importance of it.

But I think you've got to understand, we have to safeguard this community to a point where it might not be you guys putting these medical marijuana dispensaries on every corner -- and by statute, if we let it happen, anywhere there's a pharmacy, they can put a medical marijuana dispensary in this county in an incorporated area.

So imagine how many Walgreens and CVSs we have. So that can pop up. And it may not be great guys like you putting them up. It may be the ones that are just trying to do it because they know down the road there's a chance that Florida may get recreational marijuana. And by default, once they have their brick and mortar store, they will be the dispenser of recreational marijuana.

So at that point we have to look at the makeup of this county and what we want or don't want, and that's the important thing. It's not the fact that we want to harm anybody that, you know, medically this can help.

I get it. It does help, and there are people that have prescriptions and use it for legitimate reasons. And I think -- and the people in the audience have to understand. I understand the farm bill back in 2018, the loopholes with the cannabis, to hemp, and the hemp allowed to farm bill to -- you sell products made from hemp. And we do see Delta 8, which I think somebody mentioned before. Delta

8 is a synthetic altercation [sic] of Delta 9. Delta is the THC.

MR. GARULAY: Not synthetic.

COMMISSIONER KOWAL: Well, it's an altered version of the hemp plant that creates THC in it.

MR. GARULAY: Chemically compounded, but it is THC.

COMMISSIONER KOWAL: Yeah. But that is -- but people can sell that because the farm bill allows it. Yes, I understand that. Understand that.

I'm just -- I'm saying, the people might not understand that, you know, it's 21 different animals, you know. Delta 9 is what the medical marijuana is received from, and that is under the schedule as the federal government recognizes it as a Schedule 1 drug, which is basically a narcotic that doesn't have any medical use, in their eyes.

But this is what we have to protect against. And I think it's -- I get it, but I don't know who's going to be the next guy to open this brick and mortar store in our county. If it's you guys, I get it. I can trust that, you know, and you'll do what's right, but the 500 other people with the big pockets that sees Florida now as another market or sees Collier County, we would lose control over that. And this is about the only tool we have to control that here.

And I campaigned for a year and a half to get this position, and not once did I have anybody approach me and say, you know, Dan, when you become commissioner, I've always had a hard time getting my medical marijuana. Can you, like, look into this? Not once.

Did people tell me we need workforce housing? Every day. People tell me we need, you know, more roads because it's traffic congestion? Every day. I never had a doctor come up to me and say, Dan -- I've never had a person say that my patient has a hard time getting medical marijuana in this county.

MR. GARULAY: You're a former police officer.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: All right, Nick. Okay.

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COMMISSIONER McDANIEL: You're not allowed to yell.

MR. GARULAY: That wasn't yelling.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: Commissioner Kowal, you've got -- Commissioner Kowal has the floor. The commissioner has the floor.

COMMISSIONER KOWAL: All right. What I was saying is that I think this is the only tool we really have to safeguard the unknown, and that's why I support it. And I just wanted to make sure you guys understand that.

MR. TAYLOR: Can I ask a quick question in regards to your statement, Commissioner?

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: Wait a second. Let me just bring this back to center. Your three minutes are up, so it's not an exchange back and forth. If he wants to ask you something -- but I would like our County Manager to read the Sheriff's letter so we can get that into the record, and then our break would have been at 6:20, so we're starting to get -- drifting a little bit at a time. I only have one commissioner lit up, Commissioner McDaniel. So let's read this short letter, we'll go to Commissioner McDaniel, and then we're going to break.

COMMISSIONER McDANIEL: Take a vote.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: Yeah, or -- unless somebody else is lit up here. But let's hear the -- let's get the letter in the record.

MS. PATTERSON: Yes. This letter dated December 15th, 2022, is a statement regarding medical marijuana dispensaries. As Sheriff of Collier County, I do not support allowing medical marijuana dispensaries in Collier County. I am deeply concerned about the negative impacts that additional dispensaries could have on the safety of our community and cannot support jeopardizing our standing as the safest metropolitan county in Florida.

Sincerely, Kevin J. Rambosk, Sheriff.



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CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: Commissioner McDaniel.

COMMISSIONER McDANIEL: Yes. And I'm going to say this out loud. I'm going to support the motion for the ban. I have enormous mixed feelings with regard to both sides of the equation. I have personal friends that have benefited from the consumption of medical cannabis because of their being able to get away from prescription drugs and the terrible negativities that transpire with that. On the other side of it, I have other friends that consumption of cannabis marijuana has led them to places unknown.

Chad was correct, Commissioner LoCastro, in his comment that, you know, we're perceiving this from our perspective -- our capacity of mobility and ability to get around and do what we do all day every day.

There are -- and we -- and on your thought process, as was with some of my other colleagues, our other colleagues, was that, you know, we're not prohibiting people from being able to get cannabis because it can be delivered, but the delivery standards are very onerous. You know, Chad spoke about being -- having a family and work, and they won't mail your cannabis to you. They won't leave it in your mailbox. You have to be standing there at the door in that 12-hour window in order to, in fact, receive it, so...

But you are not incorrect in your comments with regard to the -- if it is important, you'll make adjustments. People can and are making adjustments to do it.

So my main reason for supporting the ban is not because I'm in support of the ban. It's because Collier County has been outside my perception of the constitution of the State of Florida. We were relegated to do one of two things -- either allow them -- they won't be on every corner, because there is statutory regulations with regard to where they can and can't be, but we are not allowed to limit the amount of them, numbers-wise, or ban them. We had to do one of

those two things, and we never did either of those, which was why I started last year to bring forward the ordinance to allow them again. But I'm -- I want this county to be in conformity with the statute and the constitution.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: Okay.

COMMISSIONER McDANIEL: So that's why I'm supporting it.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: Commissioner Hall.

COMMISSIONER HALL: So I make a motion to ban the ordinance or to approve the ordinance banning the medical marijuana dispensaries.

COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: I'll second that, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: And, Commissioner McDaniel, did you make the actual motion, or -- I mean, it sounded like you were sort of making one.

COMMISSIONER McDANIEL: No, I was -- I said --

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: Okay. So we have a motion from Commissioner Hall. It's seconded by Commissioner Saunders.

All in favor of enacting an ordinance banning the establishment or location of medical marijuana treatment center dispensaries, say aye.

COMMISSIONER HALL: Aye.

COMMISSIONER McDANIEL: Aye.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: Aye.

COMMISSIONER SAUNDERS: Aye.

COMMISSIONER KOWAL: Aye.

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: Those opposed?

(No response.)

CHAIRMAN LoCASTRO: It passes unanimously.

(Applause.)