

Legal squabbles may doom Lone SLT pot shop

By Kathryn Reed

"You have just hit us with a bomb."

That was the reaction of a care-giver when told Tahoe Wellness Cooperative will likely close next month.

The medical marijuana dispensary's permit expired in May. City officials have been working with Cody Bass, who operates the nonprofit, to get the business into compliance. The city finally said enough is enough and told Bass the company must cease operations Dec. 13 if it does not have a valid permit.

A condition of the two-year permit is for the collective to have written permission from the landlord to operate this type of business. That permission has been elusive.

Patty Olson owns the commercial strip in the Bijou Center where the collective is located. She was a pioneer here, having moved to the city in the 1950s before it was a city. Olson moved to Sparks a couple years ago.

The property is under the auspices of a family trust that is controlled by her son, Patrick. The family has run into some difficult financial times since she relinquished control of her finances. They almost lost the family house behind the center. This fall a local businessman came forward with funding so the house would not be foreclosed on. Patrick Olson still lives in the house.

Patty Olson told *Lake Tahoe News* she has been advised by her attorney, Bruce Grego, to not talk about what is going on.

"I'm not privileged to give you any information," the 91-year-old Olson told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Grego also is not talking.

The trust also owns the cabin that houses the tattoo shop.

Bass and the Olson family are involved in several lawsuits.

In March, Bass told *Lake Tahoe News* he was buying the property where the collective is as well as the Olson family home. He has sued the family for breach of contract. Those close to the case told *Lake Tahoe News* that the option to buy expired.

The Olsons have filed suit trying to evict Bass, contending that he is arrears in rent by at least six months.

Bass could not be reached for comment.

A settlement conference is scheduled for Nov. 29 regarding the eviction and a trial is set to start in February for the breach of contract lawsuit.

Waiting in the wings for the lawsuits to settle is a well-known South Lake Tahoe businessman who owns other property in the Bijou area. *LTN* sources said the sale of the Olson property is contingent on Bass not being there.

What isn't known is why the Olsons prefer selling to the unnamed businessman over Bass. However, it is well-known that city officials have wanted TWC to close and are working with the businessman.

With TWC being the last place to get medicinal marijuana in South Lake Tahoe, if it closes, it would create a void in the lives of those who need the product.

"The patient that I am caregiver for has been going to the collective since it opened. I go weekly to get this person's medicine and it has allowed this person to have a better appetite, and dramatically cut back on pain medication," Rosemary Manning told *Lake Tahoe News*. She is the one who said news of the closure hit her like a bomb.

Recreational marijuana is not likely an option because that will be a while before California actually allows it even though voters approved the use earlier this month. Going to Nevada will be an option she and the patient will look into.

The original moratorium in South Lake Tahoe on three pot clubs was approved in November 2009. Bass' is the last one in existence. Part of the ordinance that was later passed said the dispensaries were only allowed to operate at the address of their original permit. That means that even if Tahoe Wellness Cooperative wanted to move, it would require the council rewriting the ordinance.

Marijuana is going to be a big part of the Dec. 13 council agenda – the same day as TWC's deadline to come into compliance or lock its doors. Police Chief Brian Uhler is scheduled to give a presentation about Proposition 64, the recreation marijuana initiative that voters OK'd this month. The city probably has to change its ordinance in regards to growing marijuana.