

Live and Grow in a Rural Development? Your Road Association Probably Needs Your Help!

In the late 1960s through the 1980s, several large ranches throughout the area were split up into rural developments, the properties ultimately zoned rural residential. The County required that such developments had clearly defined road easements and that the roads followed specific guidelines; but the County assumed no responsibilities for the roads themselves, leaving that to the eventual property owners. Such roads, by developer economics alone, were not paved but gravel, and rarely were built to standards (road base, storm water shedding, fire concerns, etc.).

In order to deal with road maintenance, cooperative agreements were made amongst early residents in which the labor and costs of road upkeep was equitably divided. As the number of properties owned increased this became more expensive (traffic levels) and more time consuming. Road associations came into existence. Often these early entities had to go to court to have their existence and authority to both maintain and collect monies settled and coded into the property obligations.

Over the years, State requirements established the manner in which these road associations operated, including their reporting obligations and their rights and procedures in collecting costs. In many cases, the road associations came under the Davis Sterling Act which governed any mutual-benefit common-interest organization, including not only road associations but also homeowner associations. This meant an established governing board needed to be created to address the reporting requirements and to guide the community through the increasing legal and environmental morass.

With the anticipation of, and the eventual legalization of cannabis farms, these communities were eyed as potential sites by cannabis entrepreneurs due to a number of factors, including established small-scale cannabis gardens as well as -- and most importantly -- the established and maintained roads (think water and soil trucks, etc.).

Unfortunately the increased vehicle traffic, especially the heavy loads and workers from these new commercial entities caused increase road wear, and increased road maintenance costs to the existing community as everyone shares in the costs equally (base rate plus mileage). At the same time, the existing populations are aging out, on fixed incomes, and less amiable to being on a road association board with the increasing environmental concerns and State reporting requirements. This has led to skeletal boards struggling to make ends meet and to keep up.

Because cannabis farms have similar reporting requirements and understand accounting, I would like to suggest that farmers consider becoming involved in your local road association or maintenance group as they could really use your skills and input.

These are roads you need to run your business, roads built and maintained by the larger community you have moved into.

Growers, give it some thought, and when you get the next notice of elections or call for a road maintenance team, think about signing up. Your community will be stronger for it!

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