

Erin Dunn
Community Comment
Tuesday, October 24

This is Erin Dunn of the Fortuna Chamber of Commerce with a Community Comment.

Last week something extraordinary happened in Fortuna. A miracle really. It happened because a community worked together and fought for the right thing to happen. They didn't give up and they kept their eye on the end prize.

Last week at the Fortuna Chamber of Commerce weekly meeting, the people involved with a land purchase broke the special news to the people gathered for the meeting. The property known as Nelson Lane – property that is in the County but surrounded by a Fortuna residential neighborhood, had been sold...again. The owner, a permitted cannabis grower, sold it to a former Fortuna resident—who has a house bordering the property—who turned around and leased it to an equine therapy group—Wild Souls Ranch—which had outgrown their current home in Loleta.

If you are not from Fortuna, you may remember the kerfuffle that began when a land owner originally sold this 17-acre piece of property to a pot grower. An out-of-country pot grower. Then the grower received a permit from the County for a 50 thousand square foot manufacturing site and 5 thousand square foot growing operation.

The County made a huge mistake. This property bordered a dozen or more homes. Our two local Supervisors admitted they made a mistake, but there was...allegedly...nothing that could be done. The deal was made. Worst of all, was legal.

But then the residents decided they weren't going to sit still and have their area ruined by this large pot grow operation.

First they formed an association. They organized. They spoke out. They went to City Council. They asked if this piece of property in Fortuna's sphere of influence could be annexed.

City officials understood and supported the neighborhood. It was difficult to do anything about it for several reasons. It was County property, so they couldn't stop the grow. And the proposed annexation was expensive with a budget that is tight. But they were looking into it and trying to move forward.

The frustrated neighborhood association started going down the legal path for a solution. At their own expense.

And then, a miracle happened. Well, not exactly a miracle, but it feels like a miracle. The grower sold the property to one of the neighbors. And that neighbor, spurred on by the idea presented by her daughter-in-law, leased the property to Wild Souls Ranch. A group that was going to have to leave their home in Loleta and they were in need of...well...a miracle.

Sometimes great things happen when people band together to do what's right. Sometimes that "thing" isn't even what they had planned. Sometimes it works out even better than anyone could imagine.

This is a story of perseverance, of the power of community and grass roots efforts. This is a story of a miracle.

This has been Erin Dunn with a community comment.