

# Community Meeting on the Soda Springs Cannabis Dispensary 21 May 2026 — Summary

## Background

The North Tahoe Truckee Leadership Group team (also known as “Summit Slayers” (SS) — Faviola Alcocer, Maria Beaton, Cory Caldwell, Sara Schrichte, and Patrick Sheehan) and three representatives from the Donner Summit Association (DSA) (Pat Malberg, Helen Lummis, and Dick Simpson) met approximately every two weeks from January to May to assess the economic impact of Nevada County’s proposed cannabis dispensary on the Soda Springs area. For SS this was a training exercise so team members could practice leadership skills useful in a tourism-based economic environment.

The Slayers’ original objective was to provide DSA with suggestions on how to gauge economic impact of the dispensary so that DSA could then make an assessment itself. Because the County was already moving toward selection of a vendor when the project began, SS assumed responsibility for conducting much of the early research, making several trips to Nevada City to attend meetings and interview key people. The information gleaned by SS was well beyond what DSA could have realistically acquired by itself in the same time frame. However, the County was only finalizing selection criteria when the project ended; so, the accelerated research schedule may not have been needed. Nonetheless, the results were significant.

A community meeting was scheduled for May 21, starting 30 minutes after the nominal end of DSA’s monthly Board meeting. Soda Springs Mountain Resort hosted both meetings at its main lodge. The program would include a 5-10 minute welcome and introduction by DSA, a 20-25 minute presentation on economic issues and status of the dispensary selection by SS, and 25-35 minutes of questions and answers. The number of attendees could not be predicted, so a hybrid format was chosen — in-person participation by (mostly) local residents and remote participation (via Zoom) by Summit visitors and property owners who were not residents. A practice session to test slide presentation for both in-person and remote participants was held on May 14; it identified a plausible path through equipment incompatibility issues.

Announcements for the community meeting were posted at the Soda Springs General Store and Post Office, in the *DSA News* section of DSA’s web site, and to the DSA Secretary’s e-mail list — augmented by SS addresses, two individuals from local ski clubs who had expressed interest in the topic, and the e-mail manager for the Serene Lakes Property Owners Association, who then forwarded the invitation to his SLPOA membership list.

## **Implementation**

Thirty minutes had been allocated for the transition from DSA Board meeting to the community cannabis session. In fact, the Board meeting ended early; but bringing up the Zoom meeting proved to be more difficult than expected so an alternative to the May 14 configuration was chosen — Mike Spain (manager of Soda Springs Mountain Resort) would show one copy of the slides on a local large screen for in-person attendees; the rest of the meeting (including presentation of a separate copy of the slides) would be run through Simpson's laptop to Zoom. This required coordination between the two slide sets but seemed to work after some real-time practice.

The meeting began on time with about 30 people in person and about 10 on Zoom. The presentations (including both video and audio) appear to have reached the remote participants, but there was almost no communication from them back to Soda Springs. Once the program moved to Q&A, the audio reaching remote participants degraded significantly. Helen Lummis was able to move Simpson's laptop around the room so that some in-person commentary reached the remote audience.

Not all presenters kept to the schedule, which meant there was less time for comments and questions at the end. No one in the remote audience was able to get questions answered; but some in the Soda Springs audience (who were monitoring Zoom) noted that questions were appearing in the chat.

The meeting ended about 7:45 — 15 minutes later than scheduled, but 15 minutes ahead of a “drop dead” end at 8 PM which Mike Spain had requested so that he could get home to Reno. Discussions continued outside until Mike advised that he needed to clear the parking lot before heading home. Sara Schrichte included a QR code in the slide set which allowed participants to send feedback on both the format and content of the meeting; she has collected and summarized those separately.

### **Zoom AI Content Summary, edited by Simpson**

#### **Quick Recap**

The meeting focused on economic development opportunities on Donner Summit, specifically discussing a proposed cannabis dispensary in the Soda Springs area. Summit Slayers, a group of five locals from the North Tahoe Truckee Leadership Group, presented their research on Nevada's County's dispensary plans and how similar communities like Breckenridge (CO) and Mammoth (CA) have implemented cannabis retail businesses, highlighting potential economic benefits including tax revenue and job creation.

In her presentation, Kimberly Parker from Nevada County's Economic Development Office explained her role in supporting local business growth. She wants to hear what would make sense in the area from the community. Later, during the SS presentation, she shared context on the county's cannabis ordinance. It will allow two dispensary licenses (only one a year) in the unincorporated areas of Soda Springs and North San Juan. At this time, we don't know whether there will be applications from either area; but only one will be selected in 2026. The applicant will then have 12 months to get everything in place to move forward.

Subsequent presentations outlined the competitive application process, evaluation criteria, and timeline for selecting an applicant who would then need to apply for a use permit within 12 months before beginning operations.

Community members raised concerns about public notification of the process, the comparison to Breckenridge and Mammoth (which they did not feel were similar to Soda Springs), tax revenue allocation to the local area, and safety implications. Diana Gamzon from the Nevada County Cannabis Alliance offered to share experiences from existing dispensaries in Nevada City and Grass Valley to address public health and safety concerns.

## **Next steps**

### **Diana Gamzon**

- Offer resources, information, and potential tours of existing dispensaries in Nevada City to Donner Summit community members interested in understanding dispensary operations and impacts.

### **Kimberly Parker**

- Ensure that upcoming Board of Supervisors meeting dates and times regarding the cannabis dispensary application process are communicated to DSA and local residents, including those in adjacent Placer County communities.
- Carry feedback to Nevada County regarding the need for more direct notification to permanent residents and voter rolls in Soda Springs for future meetings, votes, and updates related to the rural center.
- Inquire if an application for a Soda Springs dispensary is going to be recommended to the Board of Supervisors by the selection committee. Could it be agendaized for a Board of Supervisors meeting in Truckee?

## **Collaboration**

- DSA: Continue to distribute information and updates about the cannabis dispensary process and other economic development initiatives to the local community, including residents of Serene Lakes via newsletters and other communication channels.
- DSA: Update, maintain, and expand documents on DSA's website, including information about eligible parcels and the application process for the dispensary.
- Nevada County residents/DSA: Organize and advocate to Nevada County Board of Supervisors for a mechanism (*e.g.*, community benefit agreement or an earmark) to ensure a portion of cannabis tax revenue is returned to the Soda Springs area for local projects and infrastructure.
- DSA/Community: Consider developing a clear, community-driven proposal for spending any future cannabis tax revenue allocated to the Soda Springs/Donner Summit area.
- Community members interested in the dispensary selection: Research and monitor the dispensary applicant selection process and consider providing input or lobbying for applicants with strong community benefit proposals.

## **Summaries of Selected Topics**

### **Donner Summit Economic Development History**

Pat Malberg, DSA President, provided an overview of the historical context by showing slides depicting the area's past development. She noted that in 1949 there were 10 lodges, 5 gas stations, 8 taverns and restaurants, and 4 grocery stores along Old Highway 40 between Emigrant Gap and Donner Lake.

### **Donner Summit Economic Development Updates**

Pat then presented an overview of DSA's accomplishments, including bringing attention to the area, establishing the Lamson-Cashion Hub, planning for the Van Norden Meadow Visitor Center, and enhanced amenities at Gould Park, each of which should promote visitation. Kimberly Parker described her role in supporting local businesses and economic growth, highlighting initiatives such as the Nevada County Economic Development Action Plan and increased film opportunities due to new state tax credits. The discussion emphasized the importance of growing businesses from within the community and addressing workforce challenges, with a focus on expanding internship programs.

## **Donner Summit Economic Development Planning**

Kimberly introduced the [GoNevadaCounty.com](http://GoNevadaCounty.com) tourism website and discussed broadband initiatives, including a potential collaboration between Oasis Broadband and Sugar Bowl. She highlighted economic development challenges on Donner Summit such as workforce housing, affordability, and infrastructure limitations.

The Summit Slayers team explained their partnership with the Donner Summit Association to create an economic development plan, focusing on economic vitality and community enrichment. The project under discussion here involves educating the community about the new cannabis dispensary coming to the area. The dispensary study was the most timely initiative among several they could have chosen.

## **Cannabis Business Selection Process**

The Summit Slayers team presented an overview of Nevada County's process for selecting a cannabis business operator in unincorporated areas — specifically Soda Springs and North San Juan. A County-appointed evaluation committee is finalizing criteria that will be sent to the Board of Supervisors for approval before opening a 30-day application window. Summit Slayers also shared insights from similar mountain communities like Breckenridge and Mammoth Lakes, noting that such businesses can generate significant tax revenue and economic benefits for local areas.

## **Cannabis Dispensary Economic Impacts**

This part of the presentation focused on the economic potential for a cannabis dispensary in the Soda Springs area. Summit Slayers presented information about economic benefits from similar establishments in other communities like Breckenridge and Mammoth, while addressing concerns about safety, local impact, and community involvement. Residents raised questions about public notification, tax revenue allocation, and the comparison to other communities, expressing concerns about the limited population and economic viability of a dispensary in Soda Springs. The discussion highlighted the need for better community engagement and clearer mechanisms for directing tax revenue back to the local area. Next steps include continued public input opportunities and further consideration of community benefit agreements or earmarks for local funding.

**Comments Made and Questions Asked During the Q&A Period  
(no answers)  
Summarized by Simpson**

1. What rights do residents in adjacent communities (not in Nevada County) have when it comes to commenting on these cannabis dispensary issues?
2. Are Mammoth and Breckenridge good analogs for Soda Springs?
3. A Nevada County resident said he was previously unaware of the proposed cannabis dispensary plan. He does not think DSA is a good representative of Soda Springs voters (or views); DSPUD, for example, would be better. He would have preferred to see a “business center” rather than the “visitor center” that is moving forward.
4. Is there a way to ensure that cannabis tax revenue is returned to the Soda Springs community?
5. A community benefit agreement or an earmark of tax revenue would be a better way to return tax money to the community.
6. Fifty percent of general fund tax revenue should be returned to the community.
7. New businesses in the Soda Springs area are always big news.
8. Where did the idea for a dispensary in Soda Springs originate?
9. The Nevada County Cannabis Alliance is willing to coordinate tours of established dispensaries, such as in Grass Valley and Nevada City.
10. Please provide more information on the “economic development project” — that is, the bigger picture that encompasses this specific case (the dispensary).
11. Questions were raised about the safety of operating a cannabis dispensary for both the customers and the community.