

TO: Mayor and Councilmembers  
Gary Halbert, Interim City Manager  
Shawn Hagerty, City Attorney

FROM: James Jeffries, City Clerk

DATE: July 11, 2025

SUBJ: Updated Meeting Materials – July 8, 10, and 11, 2025, Special Meeting

**PUBLIC HEARING:**

- (1) **Public Hearing for the Selection of Up to Four Retail Commercial Cannabis Businesses (CCBs) with Up to Four Alternate CCBs and Finding the Action Exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15303. (Planning and Building – Sawa)**

The attached correspondence for the above-mentioned Item was received by 7:00 a.m. on July 11, 2025, and is provided for your consideration.



**From:** [Daniela Gasparini](#)  
**To:** [Clerk](#)  
**Subject:** Comment In Support of Embarc 7/11/25 City Council meeting  
**Date:** Thursday, July 10, 2025 10:36:27 PM

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Honorable Mayor and Members of the Council,

My name is Dani Gasparini. I served as Mayor of Redwood City and have remained deeply involved in local civic and nonprofit work throughout my career. I'm also a local partner in Embarc Redwood City.

As someone who spent years in public service, I know how difficult it can be to evaluate applicants and weigh the promises they make. I also know how rare it is to find a business that keeps their promises, let alone exceeds them as Embarc has done in our City.

Embarc was the first cannabis business to open in Redwood City, and to date, they remain the only cannabis operator in Redwood City to have fully delivered on their community benefit commitments. From the very beginning, they've taken their responsibility seriously by investing in programs, supporting local organizations, and ensuring their operations reflect the values of our community (diversity, equity, inclusion and hiring local talent).

Redwood City was a highly competitive process. The city was very skeptical and nervous about cannabis because Redwood City was the first City in the County and the entire peninsula to implement retail cannabis. All eyes were on Redwood City and the operators they selected to set the standard for retail cannabis implementation in our region. Embarc being the first to open, and opening in the heart of downtown Redwood City, was a big deal. Many were nervous. I was nervous, being a former Mayor, yet very supportive of this step in bringing retail cannabis to Redwood City. But Embarc exceeded everyone's expectations. Today, nearly 3 years after opening, Embarc's storefront continues to be viewed extremely positively by the City administration, elected officials and the community at large. They truly set the gold standard for what responsible, community-sensitive, and appropriate cannabis operations throughout our region.

I've worked closely with Lauren and Dustin over several years and truly value the partnership we have and the friendship we have built. They bring a level of industry knowledge and operational integrity to their business that is unmatched. They understand the complexities of local government. They understand the importance of public trust. And they've built a team top-to-bottom that reflects that seriousness in all of their operations. Not simply because I am directly involved with Embarc, but they have truly set the standard in Redwood City with their commitment to community, upholding all components of the ordinance and delivery on their community benefit.

As I understand it, Santee is evaluating cannabis operators now. I encourage you to look at the results in other communities where they operate, particularly Redwood City. Embarc has delivered time and time again, and I strongly recommend them as a true partner in successfully and responsibly implementing retail cannabis in the community. Their business model has exceeded my expectations.

Sincerely,

Dani Gasparini

Former Mayor, Redwood City

Dani Gasparini

[REDACTED]

Redwood City, CA 94062

Cell:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Healdsburg, CA 95448

**From:** [Rev. Dr. David C. Isom](#)  
**To:** [Clerk](#)  
**Subject:** Comment in Support of Embarc – 7/11/25 City Council Meetin  
**Date:** Thursday, July 10, 2025 7:01:57 PM  
**Attachments:** [City of Santee Recommendation 7-20-25.cleaned.pdf](#)

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**REV. DR. DAVID C. ISOM, RETIRED**  
**THE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA REGION**  
**CHRISTIAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

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*"Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance." – Proverbs 1:5*

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7/10/2025

Dear Mayor and Councilmembers,

My name is Rev. Dr. David C. Isom and I served as the Pastor of the St. Stephen CME Church in Fairfield for many years. I'm also the former President of the Board of the Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District where I served for 12 years.

I dedicated my life to serving the Fairfield community, particularly our youth, and I appreciate the opportunity to offer my support for Embarc's application in the City of Santee as a proud member of their Fairfield Community Advisory Board.

When it came time for the City of Fairfield to open dispensaries I was clear-eyed about the kind of accountability and care we needed from any cannabis business seeking to operate in our community.

When Embarc first approached me, I was extremely hesitant. I did not want to be involved in supporting cannabis given my role in youth education and as a Pastor. Yet, Embarc came and talked to the community early and often, and eventually built trust with a truly impressive group of local leaders who joined their Fairfield Community Advisory Board, which I eventually joined and have now served on for the past three years.

As someone who has really gotten to know the Embarc team, I can tell you that Embarc has always emphasized youth drug prevention and education as a core part of their mission. In Fairfield, Embarc has built partnerships and structures that support youth and local priorities. Their model is important because it allows for flexibility to address community needs as they arise. Their approach is informed, deliberate and guided by local input.

They welcome accountability, but to be honest, I can't remember a time I felt the need to hold them to account because they're so proactive about addressing community needs. I've seen how Embarc runs their stores from the very top of their management team to their most junior retail employee. They all show up when it matters and put the needs of the community first in their operations.

I know you are weighing this decision carefully. That's commendable. But if the City of Santee is going to allow cannabis retail, I know choosing Embarc is the right decision. They understand that protecting the community and the future of your youth must always be at the center of how they move forward. I am certain that they will be as great a community partner in Santee, as they are in Fairfield!

Sincerely,

+Rev. Dr. David C Isom

Senior Pastor, Retired, St. Stephen CME Church

Former President of the Board of the Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District

**From:** [Escamilla, Manny](#)  
**To:** [Clerk](#)  
**Subject:** Letter of Support - Catalyst  
**Date:** Thursday, July 10, 2025 8:57:17 PM  
**Attachments:** [Catalyst Letter of Support - Supervisor Sarmiento .pdf](#)

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Please see the attached letter of Support from Orange County Supervisor Vicente Sarmiento.

All the best,

Manny



Manuel J. Escamilla  
[manuel.escamilla@ocgov.com](mailto:manuel.escamilla@ocgov.com)  
Senior Policy Advisor  
Office of Supervisor Vicente Sarmiento  
County Administration North  
400 W. Civic Center Drive, Sixth Floor  
Santa Ana, CA 92701  
Office: 714-834-3220  
Cell: 657-401-5554



**VICENTE SARMIENTO**  
ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
SUPERVISOR, SECOND DISTRICT

COUNTY ADMINISTRATION NORTH BUILDING  
400 W. CIVIC CENTER DRIVE, SANTA ANA, CALIFORNIA 92701  
PHONE (714) 834-3220

July 10, 2025

Santee City Council  
City of Santee  
10601 Magnolia Avenue  
Santee, CA 92071

RE: Support for Catalyst - Santee Cannabis Business Permit Application

Dear Honorable Members of the Santee City Council,

I am writing to express my strong support for the selection of Catalyst - Santee for a cannabis business permit in your city.

As Orange County Supervisor for the Second District and former Mayor of the City of Santa Ana—one of the first jurisdictions in Orange County to implement a regulated cannabis program—I understand the critical role cities play in selecting operators who are not only compliant, but also committed to community well-being and long-term success.

During my time on the council, Santa Ana became one of the first municipalities in Southern California to allow for the licensing of cannabis retail businesses. Santa Ana voters passed Measure BB, which I supported with my vote. At the time of Santa Ana's initial permitting in 2015, there were many unknowns in the cannabis industry. Particularly, the businesses that would be the most successful at accomplishing the objectives of Santa Ana's cannabis program, proactive regulation, revenue generation, job creation, and social equity, were unknown.

Beyond their economic impact, Catalyst has demonstrated deep community commitment—hosting expungement clinics, blood drives, and a beloved annual Christmas tree giveaway. They've also established a distribution facility adjacent to their retail site, reflecting a long-term investment in the local economy.

Given their proven track record, I have full confidence that Catalyst - Santee will bring the same level of professionalism, community engagement, and economic contribution to your city as they have in Santa Ana. Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Vicente Sarmiento".

Vicente Sarmiento  
Supervisor, District 2  
Orange County Board of Supervisors

**From:** [Sandi Sawa](#)  
**To:** [Gary Halbert](#); [Shawn Hagerty](#); [James Jeffries](#)  
**Subject:** Fw: IMPORTANT INFORMATION BEFORE TOMORROW'S DECISION – Misrepresentations by Applicants  
**Date:** Friday, July 11, 2025 6:22:00 AM  
**Attachments:** [IMG\\_0495.PNG](#)  
[IMG\\_0496.PNG](#)  
[IMG\\_0496.PNG](#)  
[RPreplay\\_Final1706833861.mov](#)

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**From:** Rebecca Abbott [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 10, 2025 10:26:00 PM  
**To:** Cannabis Info <CannabisInfo@cityofsanteeca.gov>  
**Cc:** John Minto <JMinto@CityofSanteeCa.gov>; Rob McNelis <RMcNelis@CityofSanteeCa.gov>; Ronn Hall <RonnHall@CityofSanteeCa.gov>; Laura Koval <LKoval@CityofSanteeCa.gov>; Dustin Trotter <DTrotter@CityofSanteeCa.gov>; Sandi Sawa <SSawa@CityofSanteeCa.gov>  
**Subject:** IMPORTANT INFORMATION BEFORE TOMORROW'S DECISION – Misrepresentations by Applicants

Dear Mayor Minto and Councilmembers,

I'm reaching out with urgent and verifiable information that I believe you should consider before finalizing your licensing decisions tomorrow.

During recent interviews, multiple applicants claimed that they have never defaulted on payments to vendors. This is demonstrably false. Some of these same applicants, including March and Ash, currently owe tens of thousands of dollars to small, independent vendors — many of whom have been left unpaid for months or even years.

Worse, there is video evidence of the owner of Off the Charts (OTC) bragging about **intentionally stiffing** “mom-and-pop” vendors. This is a pattern of conduct that reflects how they do business.

I urge you to review the attached material and consider whether this is the kind of operator that should represent the City of Santee.



Off the Charts Dispensary CEO talking  
about how much money he saved by not  
paying "Mom and Pop" brands



Video courtesy of  
[@bigredsfarm](#)

Repost [@bigredsfarm](#)

Here we have the CEO [@otc\\_ceo](#)  
and owner of Off The Charts  
dispensary talking about how  
much money he saved by not  
paying the mom and pop brands...

10:14



CENSORED

I can't express how offensive this is. The owner, Norman, who owes my company ~\$20,000 and refuses to respond to cpllection calls, texts, and emails. How dare he use this strategy to build his business in the backs of all the "mom & pop" businesses he disparages!! WE are the backbone of the industry!!



15 likes   Reply

10:15



Off the charts owes us \$25,000  
between 3 stores.

They def send fake "payment pending"  
emails. On average takes 90-100 days  
to collect if you're lucky and annoying



10:15



Off the charts owes us \$25,000  
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emails. On average takes 90-100 days  
to collect if you're lucky and annoying





**From:** [Rtdeckcrew](#)  
**To:** [Clerk; 100 Club of Solano and Yolo Counties](#)  
**Subject:** "Comment in Support of Embarc – 7/11/25 City Council Meeting."  
**Date:** Thursday, July 10, 2025 8:09:57 PM

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Dear Mayor and Councilmembers,

My name is Ron Turner. I served as a police officer for more than two decades in Fairfield. My son is currently a police Sergeant in Fairfield, so you could say public safety and service are values that run deeply in my family. I also served as the District Director for Senator Bill Dodd and now President of the 100 Club of Solano and Yolo Counties, supporting families of fallen first responders. Most relevant to your discussion, I'm the proud local owner of Embarc Fairfield and I am writing to share my experience and express my support.

I was raised to emphasize accountability, most importantly to the community I swore an oath to defend. I'll plainly say that when I first heard about Embarc, I had my fair share of doubts. Like most law enforcement officers, I was skeptical of cannabis legalization.

But what I found changed my perspective entirely on how cannabis can and should benefit the communities they serve. I have worked very closely with Lauren and Dustin for nearly 5 years now and am proud to be a part of the Embarc family.

Embarc operates with the professionalism and attention to detail that I expect from any business serving the public. Their security measures are comprehensive. Their compliance procedures are rigorous. Their community engagement is authentic. Lauren and Dustin are two of the most knowledgeable, professional and committed business people I've encountered in any industry, let alone among their peer cannabis operators.

In Fairfield, our Community Advisory Board, which I chair, uses the 1% of gross revenue that Embarc provides to a host of local needs. Ranging from support for the Police Activities League in Fairfield, which is near and dear to my heart, as well as youth drug education and prevention programs with local youth organizations. We support educational scholarships and faith-based organizations, food pantries and so much more. The Board model works as it ensures that we, as community leaders who know the needs in our community, are empowered to direct funds where and when they are most needed.

My son, who serves as a police Sergeant in Fairfield, has had only positive interactions with Embarc's operation there. Embarc often works with our local PD to help solve crimes that have nothing to do with their operations, but just to help local law enforcement through the utilization of their significantly advanced security systems, such as FLOCK in solving other crimes in the community.

I've visited Embarc locations across California and reviewed their operational procedures extensively. They consistently exceed regulatory requirements and

maintain the highest standards of public safety.

Based on my law enforcement experience and direct observation of their operations, I can confidently recommend Embarc as a responsible operator who will serve Santee professionally and safely.

Sincerely,

Ron Turner

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Ron Turner.A solid black rectangular box used to redact contact information, likely a phone number or email address.

Retired Police Officer, City of Fairfield

Local Partner, Embarc Fairfield

**From:** [Tammie Helmuth](#)  
**To:** [Clerk](#)  
**Subject:** Comment in Support of Embarc – 7/11/25 City Council Meeting  
**Date:** Thursday, July 10, 2025 6:14:24 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

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Dear Santee Mayor and City Councilmembers,

I am Tammie Helmuth and I serve as the CEO of the Girl Scouts of California's Central Coast. While I've never been supportive of cannabis, I want to offer my full support for Embarc. I'm proud to serve on their Community Advisory Board in Ventura and I'm happy to speak to how they show up for our community because they've proven themselves to be a committed partner.

I joined Embarc's Community Advisory Board because I wanted to ensure the financial benefits of cannabis were invested in our most promising residents – our youth. Through their sole financial support, we launched the Botvin LifeSkills program, an evidence-based youth drug prevention and education curriculum that's made a real impact on the young women and girls we serve. We launched this program in partnership with our Ventura County Sheriff's Department. When I first met with Devon over 4 years ago now, she promised that Embarc's community funding would prioritize the protection and education of our youth with a focus on drug prevention – and that is exactly what Embarc has done.

Embarc is also committed to being partner in the community. Not just in terms of financial benefits, but in terms of “showing up”. Their in-store staff have volunteered with us, showing up at a parking lot before sunrise to distribute over a million boxes of Girl Scout cookies at our annual Mega Drop. In addition, at Advisory Board meeting, they ask how they can support our mission and then they deliver by volunteering at our events. That kind of proactivity is rare, and it speaks volumes about their values and the way they do business in the community.

Embarc was the first dispensary to open in the City of Ventura and while I did not support retail cannabis stores, I will continue to support Embarc. They have integrated safely and sensitively into the community and are located in the heart of midtown Ventura. Their team goes above and beyond to improve their neighborhood through regular clean-ups, collaborations with near-by businesses and remaining extremely attentive to community needs. In fact, just last month I was at an event with an Embarc staff member and folks came up to thank them for consistently picking up trash near their storefront. They have also been a catalyst for economic growth. The Ventura licensing process was very controversial and difficult, and with Embarc being the first to open – they set the

standard for responsible retail cannabis. Today, cannabis in Ventura is viewed very positively by both community leaders and elected officials, without regret.

I must tell you that I never thought I would be writing a letter in support of a cannabis company. But Embarc has not only earned my trust but also my respect in supporting drug prevention education as they promised. This must be front of mind in your positions. Embarc is the only cannabis company that I have seen invest in this area. Not only in our city, but throughout the communities they are in. It is part of their DNA and this investment and commitment shouldn't be overlooked! If you're looking for an operator that understands real partnership and community engagement, I'm confident you can't find better than Embarc. I haven't.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the benefits Embarc provides to the youth and our community, my contact information is listed below.

### **Tammie Helmuth**

Chief Executive Officer

**Girl Scouts of California's Central Coast**

1500 Palma Drive Suite 110

Ventura, CA 93003

Direct: 805-232-3971

Cell: 805-320-4078

[www.girlscoutscoc.org](http://www.girlscoutscoc.org)

**Let's Talk – Book Time Here.**

*Serving Santa Cruz, San Benito, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura Counties*



**From:** [Terry Moore](#)  
**To:** [Clerk](#)  
**Subject:** Comment in Support of Embarc 7-11-25 City Council Meeting  
**Date:** Thursday, July 10, 2025 7:37:18 PM  
**Attachments:** [Terry A. Moore Public Comment Santee.docx](#)

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Caution: The sender name (Terry Moore) is different from their email address (cpoaprez@sbcglobal.net), which may indicate an impersonation attempt. Verify the email's authenticity with the sender using your organization's trusted contact list before replying or taking further action.

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City of Santee  
Attn: City Clerk

To Whom it May Concern:

I wish to provide a Comment in Support of Embarc, in reference to the City Council Meeting scheduled for July 11th, 2025.

Thank you. Please see the attached letter.

Terry A. Moore

Mayor and Councilmembers,

My name is Terry. I am a former Police Officer for the City of Chico. I had the distinct honor to serve as President of the Chico Police Officers' Association for many years. Public safety has been the focal point of my life.

When it came time for Chico to consider opening our doors to cannabis, I approached the issue with the same lens I do for any issue. What is safest for our community, and who can we trust to do things right?

In Chico, that answer was clearly Embarc.

From a law enforcement officer's point of view, Embarc is, and has been, a model operator. Their security standards are rigorous and I believe they exceed requirements. The Embarc staff are well-trained and their overall approach reflects a real understanding of what responsible integration into a community should look like.

They don't cut corners. They follow rules to the letter. Most importantly, they engage with city leaders and public safety agencies to build and maintain cooperation. They have done this from the first day they received their license.

I was asked to join Embarc's Chico Community Advisory Board, and to take an active role in directing community benefit funding to those who need it the most. I was also encouraged by their willingness to be held accountable to someone like me.

Embarc consistently works to be an upstanding member of our business community, donating every quarter to the groups and organizations in Chico that need it most. As a member of their Community Advisory Board, we have been able to donate tens of thousands of dollars to support our local non-profits. As an example, we have launched a youth drug prevention curriculum with the Chico Boys and Girls Club, funding for beautification of local parks and support for many local needs. For me, with consideration to my law enforcement career, it felt a bit awkward at first. But now I see the incredible results when we are able to fund so many youth groups and various non-profits. I have seen a lot of smiling faces.

Embarc is one of those rare businesses that works hard to be good neighbors. That means investing in their previously abandoned property, maintaining strong security presence and operating in a way that promotes the well-being of the community outside their doors.

As a former police officer and someone who has spent years promoting safe, thriving communities, I truly believe Embarc is the kind of operator you will want on your roster as you prepare to welcome legal cannabis.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Terry A. Moore". The signature is stylized with a large, bold "T" and a cursive "A".

Terry A. Moore

Former President, Chico Police Officers' Association

[REDACTED]

**From:** [Violeta Alvarez](#)  
**To:** [Clerk](#)  
**Subject:** Public Comment RE Special Meeting of the Santee City Council on 7/11/2025, Support for Catalyst - Santee  
**Date:** Thursday, July 10, 2025 11:08:09 PM

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My name is Violeta Alvarez, and I am a CA licensed attorney. I am submitting this written public comment in my personal capacity in strong support of Catalyst-Santee's application for a cannabis business permit in the City of Santee.

For over three years, I have had the privilege of partnering with Catalyst and Catalyst Cares, on a range of social justice initiatives—most notably, efforts to help individuals expunge and clear their criminal records. To date, our collaboration has resulted in the successful expungement of more than 300 cannabis-related offenses. This work underscores Catalyst's deep and consistent commitment to equity, rehabilitation, and community upliftment.

Catalyst's reputation across California speaks for itself. Their operations are professionally managed, socially conscious, and economically beneficial to the communities they serve. Granting a permit to Catalyst-Santee will not only contribute to the City's economic development but will also ensure that the cannabis business is implemented with integrity, inclusivity, and accountability.

I have full confidence in Catalyst-Santee, Catalyst Cares, and the leadership of Elliot Lewis and Damian Martin. Their track record demonstrates that they will meet—and likely exceed—the objectives of Santee's cannabis program, just as they have done in numerous cities across California.

Respectfully,

Violeta Alvarez