

Convention:

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activists, downtown business leaders and representatives of the mayor's office, though no formal proposal had emerged at press time.

Tourism and other officials have acknowledged that the time it will take to bring all the parties together on a revised proposal, along with the process of getting a ballot measure certified, likely mean the new measure will come before voters in November 2018, rather than June.

"Conversations continue to move forward in a positive way – with community, business, and labor at the table in good faith," said **Laura Fink**, founder of local consulting firm **Rebelle Communications** and the designated media spokesperson for the talks. "We remain committed to continuing our dialog and working together to address the pressing needs of our city and region."

This past June, the San Diego City Council by a 5-4 vote rejected a call from Mayor **Kevin Faulconer** for a special election this fall to decide on a proposed hotel tax hike of up to 3 percent. That measure was intended first to support a convention center expansion, but it also sought to create a funding stream to address other civic needs including homeless services and street repairs.

After that council vote, the convention center funding plan as of mid-year was considered to be heading for the November 2018 general election, along with a separate proposal for the SoccerCity mixed-use development in Mission Valley.

Several council members in June did not agree with hotel tax hike supporters that the convention center issue constituted an urgent or emergency situation



File rendering courtesy of San Diego Convention Center Corp.

This rendering shows part of an earlier proposed \$520 million expansion of the San Diego Convention Center, which was scuttled by a 2014 court ruling regarding its funding mechanism. The same location is now the site of a hotel project proposed by two local development companies.

that could not be addressed next year. Since then, the city has seen a worsening of the homeless crisis, marked by an outbreak of Hepatitis A that has caused 18 deaths, primarily among the homeless.

To gain council and ultimately voter approval for the convention center expansion, observers have said officials will likely need to boost the portion of hotel tax proceeds that would go toward homelessness and other pressing city matters.

Some community advocacy groups, including those pushing for better services for the homeless and more affordable housing, have argued that those issues deserve their own funding measure on a future ballot, separate from the convention center expansion issue.

Even if the political obstacles to a convention center ballot measure are overcome, there is still the unsettled matter of where exactly a convention center expansion would be built.

Port of San Diego officials are currently processing a proposal by San Diego-based **Fifth Avenue Landing LLC** and Encinitas-based **The Robert Green Co.**, calling for an 831-room, \$270 million hotel.

The proposed site is the same spot where city and convention center officials had previously planned to build a \$520 million expansion of the center, but that project was scuttled in 2014 when a court ruled against its proposed funding mechanism.

Attorneys for Fifth Avenue Landing, which is led by developers and longtime port tenants **Ray Carpenter** and **Art Engel**, have previously issued public warnings to city officials not to pursue the hotel project site for a convention center expansion, noting that their clients have invested significant time and financial resources into planning for their project.

In a recent interview, **Robert Green**, president and CEO of the eponymous

development company, said he and his development partners at Fifth Avenue Landing are proceeding as planned with their project, which is in early design and environmental review stages.

"We're going to meet our obligations under our lease with the port district," Green said. "We can't be distracted by some other project that may or may not happen."

Fifth Avenue Landing's lease with the port district, which is due to expire in 2024, calls for developers to build a hotel with at least 400 rooms that are comparable in quality to those of other bayfront hotels.

As the landlord, it would ultimately be up to the port district to decide how it wishes to enforce the lease requirement. For now, port officials have said that the processing of the hotel proposal is proceeding as it would for any other similar project.

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Medical Marijuana, Inc. (OTC: MJNA), known as a "Company of Firsts" including being the first publicly traded cannabis company, is a portfolio of companies which has made some very exciting recent hires including the addition of Steve Jones as its Chief Marketing Officer. Jones brings nearly 20 years' experience in the direct sales, finance, and international logistics industries to the MJNA family of companies and will help the company continue in supplying first-class products to MJNA's many loyal customers around the world. Jones will be tasked with crafting and distributing MJNA's branding message through management of marketing assets like the website (MedicalMarijuanaInc.com), social media pages, advertising channels, regional and national events, and product packaging. "Once in a generation you have an opportunity to join a team of people who are going to fundamentally change the world," said Jones. "Joining the team at MJNA is a dream come true. I could not be more excited about the positive impacts that we are going to make in the lives of customers around the world."

To further its goal of international expansion, Medical Marijuana, Inc. has recently added Alex Grapov as its International Vice President. Grapov has over 10 years' experience in international business development and expansion. Prior to his new role, Russian-native Grapov served as Managing Director for European Operations and Senior Director of European Sales at two U.S. billion-dollar companies, driving annual sales exceeding \$100 million. Grapov will be tasked with expanding the recently established portfolio brand Kannaway Europe, which is the first hemp lifestyle network to offer phyto-cannabinoid botanical products to a worldwide market. Grapov has worked intimately within the European market space and the company believes his background and strengths in sales strategy, product introductions, market expansion, leadership and field development will help ensure Kannaway's® growth in Europe, the second fastest growth region in the world of direct sales.

Additionally, Medical Marijuana, Inc. has recently added a new Justin Stephens as its Director of Customer Relations. Stephens brings his previous experience as the European Operations Manager and then the Director of European sales and operations at a publicly held direct selling company to MJNA executive team. In these positions Justin was responsible for overseeing all European business operations and he will bring that knowledge and expertise with him to his new position as Director of Customer Relations at MJNA, especially as it expands through Europe beginning late this year.



Steve Jones



Alex Grapov



Justin Stephens



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