

MARIJUANA AD-HOC COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes – September 7, 2017

Members in Attendance: Edward (Ted) Haley – Chairman, Patricia Neary, Matthew Rushton, Patrick Hohman, and Irving Smith

Members Not Present: Karen Peabody, Betsy Chouinard, Linda Carp, Eric Desrochers, Peter Robillard

Officials in Attendance: Michael Dutton, Town Manager and Kimberly Williams, Assistant Town Manager

Meeting Called to Order: 6:26PM

Approval of Minutes. Minutes of 08.24.17 were amended and accepted by the Committee after a correction was made by a vote of 5 yea, 0 nay.

Public Comments

The Chair opens up the floor to comments from the public. The Chair begins comment section with brief description of the purpose of Public Comments on the agendas for the Committee. The purpose is to receive comments or questions from the public which can then be responded to in the next meeting by the Committee. The Chair notes that all future agendas will have public comment at the beginning with continuing business following.

Mr. Bill Akins of 5 Oak Meadow Place, addresses the Committee. Mr. Akins notes he recently moved to Bridgewater with his family, part of the decision was influenced by the Town's vote against recreational marijuana. Mr. Akins notes the community is a good town and place to live, but how would recreational marijuana sales affect overall property values? How would it affect his children? Mr. Akins also stressed concern about loss of town reputation for being a family community. Mr. Akins then asks that the Town let surrounding communities deal with recreational marijuana shops; hold off on allowing them in Bridgewater.

No further public comments are provided, the Chair asks the Committee to move onto their next item of business.

Continuing Business

The Chair and Committee engage in a discussion of continuing business.

Marijuana Ad Hoc Committee Research and Chair's Report

The Chair opens discussion of the Committee's ongoing research with a conversation on why the Ad Hoc Committee was created. The Chair notes attending a spring conference of the Massachusetts Municipal Association where a wide range of topics were addressed. The Chair noticed that recreational marijuana issues were not discussed or observed at the conference; as such the Chair believed that municipalities were going to need to have conversations on the issue. The Ad Hoc Committee was created because the 2016 vote of the Town was not fully decisive; the chair states that the vote necessitated the Committee's creation. Further, that the Committee as the Chair sees it, is made of a good cross-section of community members with varied backgrounds, reflective of the wide range of voters who participated in the 2016 vote.

The Chair moves on to discussion of researching recreational/retail marijuana issues. The Chair cites that states including Washington and Colorado have large amounts of data on the issue, but that it can be hard to obtain or expensive. The Chair further notes that the data he will provide and that members provide are not meant to sway the town into a 'yes' vote for marijuana as the town voted no in 2016, the Town Council voted 8 to 0 for a moratorium, and

the state delegation supports a moratorium as well. The Chair notes that data is available from the two aforementioned states which can address the questions about financial and social aspects to recreational marijuana.

Ms. Neary asks if the Town Attorney could be present to speak with the Committee about a recent memorandum he provide to members regarding changes to the law. The Chair asks the Town Manager to invite the Town Attorney to attend the next Committee meeting.

The Chair proceeds to share data regarding Colorado's marijuana revenue which goes into multiple places in the state's budget including education, general government and public safety. Colorado's revenue is collected through various fees and taxes such as:

- Excise Tax
- Tax on Regular Retail Sales
- Tax on Medical Sales
- Special Sales

For Colorado, the Marijuana Tax Fund's data shows fluctuations in the early years of legalization due to revenue appropriations, expenditures; the Chair notes it is unclear how Colorado accounted for and prioritized. However, from initial review of data, the Chair states that education and public safety received a benefit from the revenues. The Chair notes that the data shows a clear need for managing, regulation and enforcement; especially with respect to any moratoriums or limitations/prohibitions. The Chair notes the Commonwealth will develop regulations and rules which towns will be able to adapt and further modify.

The Chair also notes that any data he seeks to share with the Committee will be from unbiased sources, and provides notes from Colorado's 2016 health concerns report (published by Colorado Department of Health & Environment).

Mr. Rushton offers to review the health concerns report and provide notes to the Committee on the findings and data for the next meeting.

A brief discussion occurs on another report published by Colorado called 'Health Kids Colorado Survey'

The Chair also provides the committee with findings from State of Washington regarding traffic accidents data and recreational marijuana. Some of the data include statistics on accidents, fatalities, similarities to distracted driving statistics, etc. The Washington data is also separated by crashes, toxicology reporting, firearms, mental health, etc.

The Chair begins to provide data on various towns and cities in Colorado which have provided data as well on the issue of retail marijuana. Mr. Smith cautions the Chair about the town-level data. Mr. Smith notes that Colorado towns and cities are not like Massachusetts towns and cities. In the example of Brighton, Colorado, the town may have a population size similar to Bridgewater's, but Brighton's population is spread across a whole county along with unincorporated 'towns' throughout said county. The Chair kindly notes to Mr. Smith there is county data available as well and the Committee can look into that data also. The Chair also appreciates that Brighton was referenced as an example, noting that the community also banned recreational retail sales of marijuana; now it is looking to reverse that decision. The Chair suggests that Brighton could be an example for Bridgewater as it considers a proposed ban or other legislative courses of action. Returning to the point on data, the Chair notes any information the Committee gathers from research will be tangible, recognizable, and objective.

The Chair notes that the Committee should begin to do its research so the Town Council has information it can work with in the coming weeks. The moratorium allows the Committee time to do their research and to provide findings to the Town Council. Ultimately, the Committee's findings will help in Town's decision-making on how to move forward on the issue of recreational retail marijuana.

Ms. Neary asks if the Committee will be offering further recommendations now that a moratorium is in place and a ban is being offered. The Chair states that it will be the Committee's job to provide the data for the Town Council to make an informed decision.

Ms. Neary further inquired to the Chair if they (the Chair) can be an impartial party in the discussions on the issue. The Chair replies that they can be an impartial party on the Committee; they are data driven, numbers oriented, and wish to have all pros and cons under consideration. The Chair notes that his views in no way differ from those of the Committee members and that he will not encourage a generalized labeling of people (or GLOP as the Chair put it), to ensure all considerations from the Committee are impartial and informed.

With all discussion concluded a motion is made to adjourn.

Meeting Adjourned: 7:54PM