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TOWN OF CHESTER
CANNABIS CONTROL BOARD MEETING

November 15, 2022, Minutes

Board Members Present: Arianna Knapp, Lee Gustafson, Ben Whalen, and Charles Baird at Town Hall; and Tom Diak via Zoom. Absent: Barre Pinske and Reisa Alexander.

Staff Present: Julie Hance, Town Manager, at Town Hall; and Susan Bailey, Recording Secretary via Zoom.

Visitors Present: Scott Blair via Zoom.

Call to Order

Arianna Knapp called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

Agenda Item 1, Approve minutes of July 27, 2022, LCCC Meeting

Arianna asked if there were any changes to the minutes. Lee apologized he hadn't read them yet. They decided to postpone approval until the next meeting as there were only three members present who had attended that meeting and not all had read the minutes.

Agenda Item 2, General Update on State's Opening of Retail Operation

Arianna presented a snapshot of what the State had been up to. Retail opened October 1st. There are currently 10 establishments open in Vermont for retail cannabis. 291 licenses have been granted and of that, 255 are for cultivators. She thought 75% of the growers were in Tier I, small cultivation. She thought everything they were growing would fit in the meeting room just to give them an idea of the size of the operations. There are 14 retail licenses for the entire state and 10 are currently open. She thought there were 3 or 4 more waiting to open. There are 300 people with cannabis employee I.D. cards.

What is being talked about in the news is they have no product to sell because license for process and approvals are going in a metered slow fashion. The only thing they have on the shelves is a little of the flower product. Arianna thought that was good news because it was happening in an intentionally regulated space. The closest retail shops to Chester are a shop in Brattleboro that is open now and a shop that will open in Woodstock in the next 3 weeks. Lee asked if the rollout was meeting the State's expectations. She said State level leadership said it was smaller than hoped for but once they were in the process, it was exactly what they thought appropriate. The State seemed proud of where they'd gotten, and she thought they should be. Two licenses are requested for Chester for manufacturer and cultivator but none for retail. It's been quiet for Chester.

Agenda Item 3, Review "Regulating Cannabis – Information for Municipalities"

Arianna hoped everyone had gotten the 65-page PowerPoint document from the State. It was issued on September 14th before retail opened. It covers a lot of what they have discussed in their previous meetings and what people speculate about the process. There is an article on the buffer zone and what a municipal authority can do. The information graphic on page 19 clearly points out the fact that someone who applies must go to the zoning board where they want to exist first and if they are approved by them, they go to the State and who sends them back to the local cannabis board who then sends them back to the State. The local cannabis board has very little authority. The zoning board is the only place for any impact. She encouraged that if they were

1 interested in learning more about what they can do and can't do and how it all works, she couldn't
2 recommend the packet enough. They must regulate cannabis like anything else. All is the same
3 except for the school buffer zone.

4 The last thing was the overview of where they are in the State. Tobacco products are regulated by
5 a different organization and can't be sold in the same place as cannabis products. There was
6 nothing new about anything they had talked about before.

7 **Agenda Item 4, Review State Cannabis Retailer Application**

8 Arianna had wondered what is required to receive a license from the State, so she went online and
9 began the application process. If one ever comes up in her name, it was totally in the process of
10 getting a form. She encouraged anyone with concerns to look at what the state required. They must
11 provide everything, including tax returns, criminal history, and extensive information. It seemed
12 odd to Lee, in the spirit of transparency, why they don't publish it without having to fill it out. To
13 him, it smacked of not being upfront of what they will ask for. If you change your mind, they already
14 have all that information. Arianna believed it was part of a public record and Julie agreed.

15 As part of the application process, the potential business owner must outline their hiring plans and
16 how they will train their employees. It's much more information than if she were opening a shoe
17 store. It provides a higher bar than that for a typical business. They talk about sustainable
18 agricultural practices, sourcing energy from renewables, exceeding minimum waste standards, and
19 contributing to anti-pollution efforts. To move forward on your application, you must include your
20 business address, your security plan, and at some point, it asks for compliance information. Arianna
21 stopped filling in the application when it asked for insurance, taxes, and banking information. They
22 ask you to upload your business registration, contract management agreement or operating plan,
23 business plan, preoperational plan, fire safety determination, insurance coverage, escrow, income
24 tax, cash management plan, site operation security plan, hiring plan, and environmental safety plan.
25 The question of whether Chester should have their own application to require certain portions of
26 information had been a regular topic, so she brought it to their attention. One of the
27 recommendations of Reisa, who was not in attendance, was if they had met the State requirements,
28 could they ask the State to send them the information they receive with their application and that
29 would be Chester's application. Julie asked if they would do that. Arianna said she had asked before
30 September 15th and at that time, they wouldn't answer because they didn't have an application. She
31 wanted to follow up with them and wanted to know if there was any information they wanted as a
32 group. Ben thought if it passed the muster of the State's application, that was sufficient. Tom agreed.
33 For members of the commission, they have the version of the application. Lee thought they could
34 ask the question, but he wasn't ready to say yes yet. They could authorize or suggest Arianna get
35 the information. Arianna will get information if they provide data received as result of an
36 application. Lee understood a lot of it would likely be redacted.

37 **Agenda Item 5, Discuss Request for Notification from Local Zoning Authorities**

38 She has communicated with Preston Bristow and Hugh Quinn and Preston has agreed if he receives
39 an application, he will notify the Commission. When he has an application, they should plan a
40 meeting 5 weeks out.

41 **Agenda Item 6, Discuss/Prepare Chester License**

42 There was a sample of a local license document in the packet because as a Commission, they will
43 approve the design of the document and Arianna assumed it would look a lot like a license and not

1 say anything more than that. She asked if they needed to do anything official. It was a sample State
2 license she had. Julie suggested they ask Amie to design it for approval at the next meeting.

3 **Agenda Item 7, Discussion Potential for Public Information Meeting**

4 The purpose of the Commission when it was empaneled was to figure out what the State needed
5 and what they could do for the community and Town in relationship to this change in business.
6 The question is are they a resource for the community and is there an interest in having any kind
7 of open meeting or if they wanted to have something casual. Lee wasn't sure they could do it
8 casually because of the open meeting laws. If there were more than four of them, it must be warned.
9 He suggested since they don't have authority to do anything, it would be more of an informational
10 meeting and taking questions and concerns the community might have. He thought it needed to be
11 a warned meeting. Julie suggested having an official meeting but having it be casual and being
12 there to take questions. Arianna wasn't as in touch with the community members and wondered if
13 there was an appetite for that. Tom hadn't heard of an appetite for that type of informational
14 meeting and didn't see why they would do that. Since a lot of it had already been voted on by the
15 town, Ben thought one of the bigger things to do was to have a mission statement on the town
16 website under their board to state their purpose and what they are, the town said they are in favor
17 of this and what they are doing there, and it could even have a redirect that if it was something
18 they were interested in, they could look here for further information. Arianna thought that sounded
19 like a good idea drafting a statement of the nature of the Commission and their purpose. Ben hasn't
20 had anyone come to him about having something of that nature. Whether it was a small or large
21 turnout, getting education out to folks in town was good and he would be in favor of it if it was
22 something they felt strongly about doing. Lee may have misunderstood the question, he thought
23 the discussion was if they received an application, having a public meeting to let people know
24 what was happening and he thought that was what people would have interest in. He agreed with
25 Ben 100%. When applications are received and they discuss them, it's not that they have authority
26 to do anything, but it is their responsibility to let the public know what's going on in their
27 community. Lee said there was only a 50-person difference between those who voted in favor of
28 cannabis and those who didn't. He thought if there was that much of a split, having a process in
29 which they warn a meeting to discuss an application was something they should do. Arianna said
30 that would happen regardless because they must warn a meeting to discuss an application. Lee
31 understood the process but thought they may want to be more diligent in getting information out
32 there. Lee thought the more they open those lines and let people know what's going on, the better
33 off they will be as a community. Julie thought because there was information out it may be a good
34 time to have an informational meeting. Arianna said as far as the citizens, if they don't attend
35 meetings or read the minutes, they know they exist but haven't heard anything. Arianna thought it
36 would be good to let people know what's happening around the State and let them ask questions
37 about what they do as a body and what the Town of Chester does and let people know how
38 extensively the State is evaluating this opportunity. Julie suggested having the Cannabis Control
39 Commission update the Selectboard during a Selectboard meeting. The others thought that was a
40 great idea. It would have a little more attendance. Ben said for the sake of staying on track, he
41 thought they would be the conversations they have every time an application is received. He
42 suggested if it were added to the website listing when and what Chester voted to do and how it
43 works which may eliminate repeating the same battle every time. He thought it was important to
44 have that information out there. Lee agreed. Charles asked if they had a process for when an
45 application is received, because they only have 60 days before it is automatically approved.
46 Arianna said they didn't because it was the first meeting since the application existed. They're

1 going slowly because they have a three-month lead time before an application hit them, though
2 not guaranteed but was how it had been flowing. She thought that was an excellent question and
3 should be added to the next agenda. The first thing they need to decide is if the application will
4 work as their application. The next agenda will be the process because hopefully they will know
5 if the State lets them use the application. In the shorthand, what had been said at previous meetings
6 and what Arianna would iterate is if an application were to hit Chester tomorrow, they can call a
7 meeting and within the meeting, she believed they could do thumbs up or down if the seven of
8 them agreed and they would forward it even though they don't have the official process in place.
9 Lee asked how they could give a thumbs down when they don't have the authority. Arianna agreed
10 and said it was a figure of speech. Lee said basically it was just an FYI that it was coming through
11 your town. Arianna said Lee had stated the obvious and it was now reiterated more clearly, once
12 the Zoning Board had done their job, it was a rubber stamp at best. She thought it may be a topic
13 for further discussion. Lee thought having a process by which they understand, and they talk about
14 what they're going to look at, assuming the Planning Commission had no issue with it, they don't
15 have a lot to say but they can certainly ask for clarification and do what makes them comfortable
16 as a community. She liked the idea of the first step being a report out from the Cannabis
17 Commission to the Select Board simply reporting out on the state of the industry now that it's open
18 for retail and how it affects Chester and how the Commission operates. Julie said they could write
19 it, or she could just add it to the Selectboard agenda. Ben thought it may be good to have some
20 type of write-up in the Town Report because most people read the report. Julie thought that was a
21 good idea and agreed. Julie said the Town Report comes out early February and it is a report the
22 town is required to put out about the local boards, commissions, budget, and how money was spent.
23 They are a new commission and should have a writeup that talks about what they did. Ben
24 suggested the writeup could be the same for the website.

25 Julie said the Selectboard's first meeting in December's agenda was full and the second meeting
26 was close to Christmas. She suggested the first or second one in January. Arianna stated reporting
27 back to the Selectboard in January, creating a report that could be published in the annual report,
28 but which could also be published on the website. Julie said the report would need to get to Amie
29 by the first week in January. Lee asked how the report would be with Lee and Ben being at the
30 table and Julie said no action was taking place and they were just updating the Board. Arianna
31 asked Tom if he wanted to add anything, and he thought they had covered it.

32 **Agenda Item 8, Citizens Comments**

33 Arianna asked if there were any citizens' comments. She asked Scott Blair if had anything to say
34 and he said not yet.

35 **Agenda Item 9, New Business/Next Agenda**

36 Arianna wouldn't schedule the meeting at this time but would do it through an email to Julie.
37 Arianna said they could email her at any time if they wanted to add something to the agenda

38 **Agenda Item 10, Adjourn**

39 Ben moved and Lee seconded to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously, and the
40 meeting was adjourned at 7:08 p.m.