

1 **TOWN OF CHESTER**  
2 **CANNABIS CONTROL BOARD MEETING**

3 **August 10, 2023, Minutes**

4 **Board Members Present:** Arianna Knapp, Barre Pinske, Reisa Alexander, and Charles Baird at  
5 Town Hall; and Tom Diak via Zoom.

6 **Staff Present:** Julie Hance, Town Manager, at Town Hall.

7 **Visitors Present:** Scott Blair, Andrea Goldman, Leslie Blair, Meredith Milliken, and McKenzie  
8 Davis at Town Hall.

9 **Call to Order**

10 Arianna Knapp called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and thanked everyone for attending and  
11 noted it was their first gathering since last year.

12  
13 **Agenda Item 1, Approve minutes of December 13, 2022, LCCC Meeting**

14 Barre moved and Charles seconded to accept the December 22<sup>nd</sup> minutes. There were no changes.  
15 Arianna stated the minutes were approved.

16 **Agenda Item 2, Old Business**

17 Arianna asked if there was any old business and there was none.

18 **Agenda Item 3, Update on Current Cannabis Business and Applications in the Area**

19 Arianna didn't have a lot of updates. There are businesses operating in and around both Chester  
20 and Ludlow and other areas. Various growers and manufacturers are beginning to do their business  
21 and encounter town politics. For non-retail businesses, various towns are becoming aware that  
22 cannabis commissions only regulate retail. She said the commission is a resource for furthering  
23 education, but they have no jurisdiction or role for any cannabis business other than retail.

24 **Agenda Item 4, Review Application for Down to the Roots**

25 The reason for gathering was they had a retail application before them for a retail establishment in  
26 Chester. Since the commission was empaneled, the state has revised their ordinances and, the  
27 applicant had met every requirement of the state and the town has no authority other than to gain  
28 more knowledge and move forward with the license unless there were any concerns with noise or  
29 ordinances that had not been addressed. Arianna asked if everyone had an opportunity to review  
30 the application and they had. Arianna noted that the applicants were present and acknowledged  
31 and thanked them for the thoroughness and appropriateness of the documentation submitted as  
32 their application. The Commission had previously discussed what an application would look like  
33 for the town and the state came back and said they would accept what they gave them which was  
34 the name of the applicant, their address, and a copy of the town's permit and that was all they were  
35 allowed to require. Arianna thanked the Goldmill Group for providing more extensive information  
36 and allowing them to have a better understanding of their plans for incorporating their business in  
37 the Town of Chester. It was more than could have been required of them. Arianna asked if anyone  
38 had any questions for the applicant.

39 Reisa asked about a buffer zone and wondered if it had been addressed as she was absent from the  
40 last meeting. Arianna said it was addressed and the fact that the Goldmill Group had been given

1 the permit met they had met and fulfilled all buffer zone requirements and no room for  
2 reconsideration because the zoning permit was the moment the buffer zone was addressed. The  
3 zoning permit was approved in June, and she knew that was part of the process. Arianna said the  
4 only thing they could have addressed was something that had not already been addressed by the  
5 zoning permit. Reisa asked if they were sure the zoning board had addressed it and if any action  
6 was taken. Arianna said it was asked, answered, explored, evaluated, and determined. Arianna  
7 asked the applicants if they wanted to address the question. Scott Blair said the process was talking  
8 with Preston Bristow, which they did. It was 500 feet and abutting and their property does not abut  
9 the school, so it did not apply. Reisa thanked him. Julie asked how far they were from the school  
10 boundary. Andi didn't have the specifics for the front door which was the part that needed to be.  
11 She thought they were greater than 500 feet, but it didn't apply because they didn't abut. Arianna  
12 said she was hearing the property didn't abut and it was more than 500 feet, so they had covered  
13 it on two grounds, she believed. Arianna said a cloudy part of the process was they had been  
14 informed from day one that they wouldn't consider the application until the state sent them the  
15 information and then the state informed the applicant that they wouldn't consider the application  
16 until the LCCC had approved it. Once they clarified it, that's why they were there today  
17 anticipating the application would be heard by the state in two weeks. Reisa clarified that their role  
18 was to approve or deny so it could move forward to the state. Arianna said they would provide the  
19 license because the applicant had fulfilled the requirements. She had clarified for rules of order  
20 that whether a vote was needed and learned they do not vote but rather sign the approved license.  
21 Arianna said if a member chose not to sign, they didn't need to. She said a voice vote could be  
22 taken but it was not relevant, and the license would be issued based on the fact the application had  
23 checked all the boxes. Commissioners could choose not to sign the license to have their voice  
24 heard. Reisa asked why they were there. Arianna pointed to Agenda Item 5 and that's why it was  
25 on the agenda, as they had figured out a couple of months ago that they were only signing the  
26 paper. Arianna is in dialogue with members of the community and Selectboard about the value of  
27 maintaining the commission or commissioner, or some person in that role to further address  
28 questions or field questions. As a governing body, they don't, at this moment, have a role. She said  
29 it could change in 6 months as the state is continuing to roll out rules.

30 Andrea Goldman, the CEO and CFO of Goldman Group, said they prefer the d/b/a Down to the  
31 Roots. She said per the June municipal guidance, which they included in the package, if they didn't  
32 have the signage permit and zoning, the commission could say no, so she wouldn't say they didn't  
33 have any say if they had not complied. The state has given the local enforcement for checking. She  
34 said if they needed to check with the town, to please do so. She thought the commission should  
35 sign the license only if they deemed, they had complied. She agreed that the state has taken a lot  
36 away from the local commissions and thought the town should have a meaningful license fee. She  
37 said she comes from Ludlow but wanted to see the municipalities they operate in and Okemo  
38 Valley benefit from this as they are big believers in the community. Arianna said Andrea made a  
39 good point. The purpose of the commission would be if the applicants/business owners were not  
40 as conscientious, transparent, and engaged as this team has been, someone could submit an  
41 application that they didn't know was coming or knew anything about and they would be  
42 empaneled to review it. In this case, the applicants had chosen to invite them to tour the facility  
43 and had been aware of every step of their process. Arianna said Andrea had changed her own  
44 opinion of the panel. Arianna asked if there were any questions. Tom said he was very impressed  
45 with the application. Arianna believed their next order of business would be to approve the license  
46 for a retail cannabis establishment on Pineview Drive in Chester. Arianna, Charles, and Barre

1 signed the license. Reisa did not. Julie told Tom she would have the license in the office tomorrow  
2 if he wanted to sign and Tom said he would be happy to sign it. Arianna noted there were three  
3 signatures on the license which was a quorum of the commission, and they would provide Down  
4 to the Roots with a copy to submit to the state.

5 Barre added that whether they felt they had a significant role or not, for the community to know  
6 that there are people in the community who are paying attention to what is going on and give  
7 people an opportunity to talk to someone, he was with her in the idea that wouldn't it be good if  
8 they could do something but it was cool to be aware of what was going on and provide a place for  
9 the citizens to come to. Barre thought they should try to keep the commission together even if they  
10 didn't meet that often.

11 Reisa said she had chosen not to sign the license and wanted them to understand why. She said she  
12 wasn't sure having adult retail cannabis in town was good for the community. She believed it was  
13 good for individuals, but not necessarily the town. Aside from that and more importantly, like the  
14 sale of alcohol, as a democracy, they have chosen to allow the sale of retail cannabis in their state.  
15 Like the sale of alcoholic beverages over time, they have come to learn there are some negative  
16 aspects to it and as a result, there are warnings for pregnant women because it has been  
17 scientifically proven there can be damage to the baby. Similarly, there are scientific studies that  
18 genetically a fetus can be damaged using cannabis by the male during conception by affected  
19 sperm. She didn't feel there were enough studies to warrant the warnings for men as there are for  
20 women who drink alcohol. She believed in 20 or 30 years that there may be enough evidence and  
21 warnings issued to men. She wanted to make sure she spoke her mind about that. She was  
22 concerned that by providing local sales, they were giving the impression it was safe. She was  
23 concerned about having children walk by it daily on their way to school may contribute to that  
24 perception that it's okay and nothing wrong with it. She thought they could consider ways to  
25 educate the young people to abstain while they are planning to have children with their spouse or  
26 partner. Arianna appreciated Reisa sharing her concerns. While Arianna is an enthusiastic  
27 supporter of new business and evolution, she agrees there will be ongoing studies today, tomorrow,  
28 and in the future and they will learn more and mechanisms to respond as more is learned. She said  
29 it was a brand-new business and hoped the state and local boards and citizenry would pay attention  
30 to it. Arianna said there had been eras when the sale of alcohol and other products had not been  
31 attended to and there were consequences and she hoped they could learn from it as the industry  
32 moved forward.

33 Barre said one of the reasons he became a board member was they were supposed to have a certain  
34 percentage of money that goes to the state used for education, which was important and the  
35 possibility for local commissions and whether any of the money would come back to them. Barre  
36 thought Lauren Ingersoll was representing the area for addiction work and they were starting a  
37 new committee and it was quite something. He was really impressed that she asked him to be  
38 involved. They are talking about education for young people to be aware of addiction. Barre saw  
39 drugs and alcohol becoming an issue for addicts. He thought the hope in having legalized cannabis  
40 with money coming back to be put into education and awareness creating a healthy way to deal  
41 with things.

42 Arianna thought it was important and both what Reisa and Barre said applied with an ongoing  
43 conversation in town having to do with ongoing healthcare within a community and community  
44 health, social, and emotional awareness and was a piece of the same puzzle and belonged there.  
45 Barre thought maybe they could get involved with Lauren's group and keep things in the forefront.

1 Scott said they would be partnering with Lauren’s group and would conduct educational services  
2 at the high school. He said they would have a consultation office specifically for professionals in  
3 the health industry to come in and speak with anyone who wants to start using cannabis or who  
4 has concerns and wants to see how they can use it properly. He wanted them to know they were  
5 very community conscious and wanted to be involved as much as they could and give back.

6 Andrea said she and her wife wanted to echo what Scott said and said they were an open door.  
7 Prior to getting into the legal cannabis industry as an investor and worker in 2014, she was a lender  
8 to healthcare companies at RBS Citizens. She unfortunately underwrote and recommended they  
9 gave loans to opioid companies, and she could tell them that cannabis was so much safer than  
10 opioids and cannabis can be an answer to the opioid epidemic. They were all for education and  
11 they have a big space, and their consultation room is the size of some dispensaries. She is in it  
12 personally, but healthcare was first and foremost, followed by civil rights, and third, it was okay  
13 to make some money while doing good, but first and foremost was health and wellness. She offered  
14 to speak with them more outside of the meeting about their concerns, which was more important  
15 than any of the science. She said many of the studies were designed with the hypothesis that it was  
16 bad. She said President Biden had done a good service by passing legislation with executive orders  
17 and opening research. She said cannabis had failed every one of the three required tests to be a  
18 schedule 1 drug and legally she was a former corporate and securities lawyer. If you only fail 1  
19 test, you shouldn’t be a schedule 1 drug. She said they could get into the waiting room and couldn’t  
20 get into the dispensary until they let them in and showed ID and it’s scanned to make sure that it’s  
21 not expired and will then check again when someone checks out. They are absolutely against youth  
22 consuming cannabis. Andrea said there is a large list of warnings that would be on every package  
23 and information on their site. They are sponsoring a professional nurse for their customers who  
24 they view mostly as patients. Statistically, it’s been proven wherever cannabis is purchased that  
25 61% of the people use it first or foremost for something related to health and wellness. There are  
26 FDA approved drugs now that contain cannabis. It’s a natural plant that has many wellness  
27 properties. Andrea invited them to come see the property and when they opened. Resia said there  
28 were many cases where cannabis use was beneficial to people, but she wanted to make sure  
29 someone spoke up for the unborn and the babies, and thought men tended to believe it was all  
30 about the pregnancy and the woman doing the right things.

31 **Agenda Item 5, Discussion for Future Profile of Commission**

32 Arianna believed this was addressed in the earlier item. Walking into the meeting, she had believed  
33 the future was of the belief the future of the cannabis commission was a pause but had changed her  
34 own mind. She asked if anyone wanted to add anything to the topic of the future of the cannabis  
35 commission. She added that they would not establish a regular meeting by time but would meet  
36 when triggered by receiving an application from the state or community members coming to them  
37 with a concern. Barre wondered if there was something they could do at some point like a checkup.  
38 He thought they should have an ear to the ground and if something became apparent, to meet again.  
39 Arianna thought it appropriate for them to meet one year after they started and evaluate. Barre was  
40 glad she agreed they should keep something going. Reisa suggested twice a year unless they have  
41 an application. Arianna agreed to meet every six months unless there was an application.

42 **Agenda Item 6, Citizens’ Comments**

43 There were none.

44 **Agenda Item 7, New Business/Next Agenda**

1 Arianna said 1 ½ years ago when she introduced herself to the community and said she was a retail  
2 user of cannabis, part of her interest in participating in the commission was her work takes her all  
3 over the world and she had visited establishments in every state where it's legal and many places  
4 in Europe. She had finished it with it was her hope in Chester that if they had retail cannabis, it  
5 would be a world-class establishment and a good business that is here to be part of the town and  
6 add to the character and quality of our Main Street and our town and our life and be responsible  
7 business owners. Arianna could not express strongly enough how impressed she had been every  
8 step of the way with the work they had done to keep the town informed and do everything so by  
9 the book that they had shown others what the book looks like. Arianna said based on the tour she  
10 and Tom had received, their business had every reason to believe it would be world-class and a  
11 reason for other businesses in Vermont to come to Chester to learn how they're doing it. Arianna  
12 said it had been a pleasure to observe their process. She thanked them for going the extra thousand  
13 miles every step of the way. She thanked them for their civility, attention, and intention.

14 **Agenda Item 8, Adjourn**

15 Charles moved and Reisa seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed and the  
16 meeting was adjourned at 7:07 p.m.