

Mayor Mitchell Announces Developments on Medical and Recreational Marijuana

Mayor Jon Mitchell announced today two developments related to medical marijuana and recreational marijuana.

Host Community Agreement Reached for Medical Marijuana Dispensary

The Mayor announced that the City has successfully negotiated a host community agreement with Beacon Compassion Center of Norwood, Massachusetts. Beacon is presently seeking approval from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to operate a medical marijuana dispensary facility in a commercial area of Hathaway Road.

The Mayor had been skeptical of proposals for medical marijuana dispensaries in the City, but the passage of the recent statewide ballot referendum has caused many cities and towns, including New Bedford, to reassess the approach. The ballot question opened the door to widespread production and retail dispensing of recreational marijuana, making the separate state law governing medical marijuana facilities of less importance.

The Mayor noted, "The recent passage of the ballot question caused me and municipal officials everywhere to step back and reconsider how best to manage the many complex issues around the legalization of recreational marijuana. My priority right now is on recreational marijuana-related issues. Retail outlets selling recreational marijuana have the most potential to undermine our neighborhoods if they are not properly sited. The related 'grow operations' that supply the retail outlets are of equal concern."

Mitchell added, "Because medical marijuana facilities are governed by an established set of state regulations, I have more confidence that the City's concerns can be addressed, provided that we always hold potential developers to a high standard and evaluate every medical marijuana proposal on its own merits.

He continued, "My job is always to put the overall interests of the City first and that means, among other things, protecting the quality of life in our neighborhoods. The terms of Beacon agreement and the location of this particular facility serve the City's interests."

Stephen Angelo of Beacon Compassion noted, "Mayor Mitchell made it clear he expects our facility to operate at a very high standard, and Beacon is fully committed to meeting those expectations of quality, security, and safety, for the sake of both our patients and city residents."

Under the agreement, Beacon has agreed to provide substantial benefits to the City and residents of New Bedford, among them:

- Beacon will not exercise its exemption from local taxes. Notwithstanding its nonprofit status, Beacon will pay all local taxes, and in doing so, help the City in its efforts to broaden the tax base and reduce the burden on residents and businesses.
- Once the facility is fully operational, Beacon will make annual payments to the City in an amount equal to 3.75% of gross sales. At a minimum the City will receive \$325,000 during the first five years of the agreement.
- It would be operated under a strong facility security plan, and the agreement requires Beacon to operate only at its designated location, which will have little or no neighborhood-level impact.
- Beacon will also work toward employment and vendor goals

that advantage local residents and small businesses and support the City's job-creation efforts.

Mayor Mitchell also noted that reaching a host community agreement is only one step in the process toward opening the facility, saying "It is also important to keep in mind that many steps remain that are outside the ability of the City to control." The agreement will be submitted to the City Council for approval as required by law.

Moratorium on Recreational Marijuana Dispensaries Recommended

The Mayor today also submitted to the City Council a Temporary Moratorium on Recreational Marijuana Establishments in the City of New Bedford. The temporary moratorium would ban all recreational marijuana dispensaries until September 30, 2018, or until the City adopts a special zoning measure governing the recreational marijuana establishments, whichever occurs first.

In the wake of the new state law allowing recreational marijuana establishments, cities and towns across the Commonwealth have been moving to put in place common sense measures give them the opportunity to study the potential impacts of these establishments and adopt zoning and other regulations to protect neighborhoods and residents.

The Mayor noted, "It is important for the City of New Bedford to likewise move quickly using the same prudent approach as other communities."

"Recreational marijuana establishments are not presently addressed in the City of New Bedford's Zoning Code, and the City is only just beginning to identify and study the range of new legal, planning, and public safety issues associated with the future operation of these establishments," said the Mayor.

State government is similarly just beginning to formulate its approach to implementing the new law. A Cannabis Control

Commission (CCC) is being formed to oversee the licensing and regulation of recreational marijuana establishments. The CCC has until March 15, 2018 to issue its regulations and could begin accepting applications for licenses to operate recreational marijuana establishments as early as April 1, 2018.

The Mayor added, "I am committed to working together with the City Council to use effectively the period prior to the moratorium's expiration and put in place the local protections we need to keep our residents safe."