

Ad Hoc Marijuana Committee Minutes Minutes – November 20, 2019

The meeting was called to order at 8:03 am.

Roll Call

Members present were Janice DeLima and Tommy Johnson. Hope Cahan joined the meeting late. Staff present were Ethan Croce and Amy Lamontagne.

Item 1 – Select Chair

Janice nominated Tommy for Chair. He seconded it. All in favor 2-0.

Item 2 – Recap of marijuana discussion at 10/16/19 Council Workshop

Staff provided a history of the committee that was established in 2017. Work has been challenging while waiting for the state to implement legislation, as well as working with frequent Council turnover as new members come and go. In the past, there wasn't much interest in retail and cultivation. Because the town can always "opt in", there was a "wait and see" approach based on state decisions as well as what neighboring municipalities are doing. Past committees discussed restricting the number of onsite grows (i.e. allowing residents to use their property to grow plants for other people). The state allows municipalities to regulate this practice and currently, there is nothing in place in Falmouth that will prohibit or regulate this process.

The committee discussed the original charge and whether it is still relevant in 2019. Janice would like to know what other communities are doing. She doesn't want to be the first out of the gate. Are onsite grows a problem? Should we do something about them? She thinks there is a lot for the committee to learn and wants to move slowly and be deliberate.

Tommy would like to look at what other towns are doing related to a business perspective. Is there taxable revenue that Falmouth can realize? Is this an opportunity or a missed opportunity if we don't look into it? Janice agreed that it could be an opportunity to generate revenue. Tommy added if there is no demand, maybe we don't do anything. At this time in the conversation, he opens the discussion to public comment about retail operations.

Falmouth resident Keith Noyes asks why the town wouldn't want to do it. He thinks it's a good move. It's good for the town.

Falmouth commercial property owner Ed Libby explained that he has people looking to come to Falmouth. As a landlord, he wonders if he can accommodate them? He appreciates that the committee wants to listen and learn but it's been three years now. He wonders why the Council doesn't want to do retail or cultivation – what is the reasoning?

Janice explains some issues related to banking and that marijuana is still a cash business.

Ed believes that not allowing retail is a missed opportunity. He references other communities already embracing it.

Tommy wants to go slow to see how impacts will be felt. He wants to be cautious and thoughtful about it.

Falmouth resident Jacques Santucci has been in the industry for ten years. He explained that the medical industry was created by the state in 1999. He agrees that it's a good opportunity for the town to regulate. Windham didn't control medical and isn't going into retail. Banks are lending money and marijuana will be a 250-300 million market in Maine. How do you make it viable? In 3-5 years, cannabis will be like a coffee shop. Which businesses will keep the jobs? His theory is grow sites will have a problem within a year. It will take one year to transition from medical to recreational. We should grab the tax dollars.

Ed explained that the rental rate for marijuana has tripled in value.

Tommy asked what does Falmouth want to permit for adult use? Retail is the biggest concern/perception that there will be a shop on every corner. Would the community tolerate testing? How much space would be needed for staff – could there be space on Route 1 North?

Janice added that testing would bring high skilled, good paying jobs. That would be good for Falmouth.

Hope would like to monitor activity. She is interested in light manufacturing and possible TIF opportunities.

Tommy mentioned the high real estate values in Falmouth. Is it feasible for someone to buy land for a warehouse?

Janice was curious about police involvement and Tommy suggested that inviting Chief Kilbride to a future meeting might be a good idea.

The conversation returned to onsite grows. Councilor Caleb Hemphill said the committee should pay attention to this potential issue – Representative Pierce has discussed it many times. Hope wasn't sure if the town should limit this practice? Tommy asked if we're talking about regulating something that isn't a problem? Hope had concerns about air quality and possible restrictions.

Item 3 – Create Meeting Schedule

The next meeting will be Wednesday, January 15, at 8:00 am. The committee asked for Chief Kilbride to be the special guest.

Note... because of a conflict with the Appointments Committee, the meeting on January 15 was canceled and moved to February 26.

Item 4 – Other Business

Tommy announced that marijuana would be the topic at “Eggs and Issues” on December 11 in Portland. He also suggested inviting the state marijuana representative to attend a future meeting.

Janice wants to discuss how to involve the public. Perhaps the town newsletter is a good tool to educate the people as the group moves along.

The committee wanted to see South Portland’s marijuana ordinance. Staff offered to provide that information, as well as links to the MMA website for more information.

Item 5 – Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 am.

Respectfully submitted,
Amy Lamontagne
Marijuana Committee Staff