

Town of Princeton, Mass. -- Selectboard Meeting with Dept. Heads

Minutes -- September 29, 2020 – 10 AM

– Remote participation Via: GoToMeeting

Attending: Chair Karen Cruise, Richy Bisk, Matthew Moncreaff, T.A. Sherry Patch, Marie Auger, Ben Metcalf, John Bennett, Terri Longtine, Michele Powers, Wayne Adams & Jake Rocznik, John Mirick, Fred Lonardo, Edwin Carlson, Linda Nash (reporter), Susan Gonsalves (reporter),

10:03 AM Opened meeting. Karen briefly explained the Host Community Agreement (HCA) process for a retail cannabis operation in Mechanics Hall proposed by Red Cardinal LLC. There is provision for the town to receive “impact fees” for any extra costs that may be incurred because of the operation. The state Cannabis Commission allows up to three percent of annual revenues to cover the town’s qualified costs. This meeting was called to discuss potential financial impacts which department heads anticipate could arise once the business is operating.

Building Inspector Fred Lonardo – The building permit fee should cover costs to the Building Dept., Fred noted, as there are no extra or special inspections that he can see. Questions arose over using the second floor for community space, as RC has agreed to the possibility of that option. Discussion followed about making the building ADA compliant, and Fred outlined the threshold under which full compliance would be required, including installation of an elevator.

Planning Board Chair John Mirick -- He pointed out that certain groups and uses are prohibited near the facility under cannabis regulations, such as anything school-related. He also noted that the cost of an elevator, if the town required it, could kill the project entirely. He suggested instead that utilities to the 2nd floor could be roughed in during the renovation in anticipation of future (as yet unknown) uses. Any future elevator addition would be within a bump-out addition to the exterior as is typical on old/historic buildings.

ACTION: The group agreed to support the concept of providing, as part of the Land Development Agreement, community space that can be developed *within reason*.

Police Chief Michele Powers --Michele has communicated with other police chiefs in towns that are hosting cannabis operations. Focusing on Leicester, the town saw major traffic and parking problems in the first few months, as it was the first retail operation in the state. Things have since calmed down and police are not seeing extra calls or incidents related to the cannabis shop. She added that the shop owners have hired their own security detail so police detail from the town is no longer being used.

Michele also responded to questions about parking, police drive-by checks and potential increases in arrests. While there is no parking available or allowed on Main Street, signage could be installed, and fines increased as currently fines are \$10-\$20. It was noted that parking is included in the Site Plan Review with the Planning Board. Remote sites for parking, possibly negotiated with abutters/neighbors, could be utilized--especially for shop employees. A Site Plan would include input from abutters, who are directly notified and solicited for comment.

Police are already doing drive-by checks of all business sites in town, and the RC facility would not require extra attention. Michele also said that other host towns are reporting no increases in police actions, such as arrests. The high-security measures required by the Cannabis Commission are a likely deterrent to criminal behavior in addition to the fact that cannabis patrons tend to be an older (more sedate) group.

Fire Chief John Bennett – John explained that construction plans for fire/CO alarms, sprinklers and notification systems are done in-house as long as Dep. Chief Tim Kelly is available to do it. While some suggested charging RC for plan reviews and other town services, John M. pointed out that RC must be treated like any other business. Fred L. noted that when plan reviews are beyond the scope of town personnel, a third-party expert can be enlisted, at the applicant's expense, to review plans or oversee projects.

Highway Supt. Ben Metcalf -- While extra traffic is anticipated, Ben could not see the new business operating in Mechanics hall as increasing costs of the Hwy. Department. He noted that the town is responsible for maintenance of the new sidewalks. There was some discussion about adding a town bylaw to require property owners to clear snow from the sidewalks fronting their homes/yards. The issue of sidewalk maintenance will be added to the next S.B. agenda.

Terri Longtine for Board of Health – Terri could not anticipate any extra BOH costs related to the RC operation, but suggested that the board's chair, Jim Hillis, weigh in. There was some discussion about the challenge of a Title V septic system at the site and likelihood of a tight tank.

Edwin Carlson for Parks & Rec – Edwin Carlson was present to ask about new playground equipment at Sawyer Field and any contributions to the community the new business might provide. The RC group has expressed interest in a “good neighbor policy” and supporting community projects. Karen is looking for specifics within the HCA that RC can support, and she warned that the Cannabis Commission has clamped down on some of the “extras” which host towns have tried to solicit. She added that some improvements to East Princeton Village might be negotiated outside of the HCA.

Host Community Agreement next step. – Town counsel has reviewed the draft HCA and Sherry will edit it and distribute it to the S.B. and Adv. Cmte. before the weekend, for final approval next week.

Impact fee -- The group agreed to start the impact fee at three percent in the first year and adjust it, down if necessary, after that.

11 AM -- Meeting adjourned. The next S.B. meeting will be Tuesday, Oct. 6, at 10 AM.

Respectfully submitted: Marie Auger, land use coordinator