



TOWN OF PRINCETON

PLANNING BOARD

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Letter from the Planning Board Regarding Proposed Marijuana Zoning By-Law Amendments

Dear Princeton Residents:

On Wednesday January 5, 2022 at 7:30 p.m., in the Town Hall Annex and virtually via Go-To-Meeting, the Planning Board will hold a public hearing on two sets of proposed marijuana zoning by-law amendments. We need your input!

Here is some background:

In 2016, a majority of Princeton voters joined with a majority of Massachusetts voters and approved the referendum legalizing adult recreational use of marijuana. The law allowed municipalities to adopt ordinances or by-laws that addressed marijuana retail establishments, as well as the cultivation, processing, and manufacturing of marijuana. Some municipalities then followed the statutory procedures to prohibit marijuana. In Princeton, following the creation of the Cannabis Control Commission and the promulgation of regulations for the cultivation and sale of marijuana, the Selectboard asked the Planning Board to look into likely issues and make recommendations.

The Planning Board approached that task from a land use viewpoint, not a law enforcement viewpoint. The Planning Board held a series of meetings and discussions on regulating marijuana. Few Princeton residents attended these public meetings, and those residents who did participate were supportive of marijuana in Princeton. In its 2018 report, the Planning Board observed that commercial cultivation of marijuana was a form of agriculture that could be conducted anywhere in Town provided that the site and the applicant were licensed by the Cannabis Control Commission, although there were practical obstacles to commercial cultivation of marijuana in Princeton such as growing conditions and resource needs. The Planning Board did recommend, and in May 2019 Town Meeting approved, a zoning by-law amendment to require site plan approval for commercial cultivation of marijuana.

Last summer, the Town was approached with a proposal for outdoor commercial marijuana cultivation at the westerly end of Old Colony Road. The proposal involved 100,000 square feet of canopy (about 2 ½ acres) on an 18-acre site. While Community Host Agreement discussions for that proposal were pending with the Selectboard, the applicant identified another, much larger site on Beaman Road. The applicant then proposed at least four outdoor cultivation operations on that site, each of which would have up to 100,000 square feet of canopy, each run by a separate, licensed entity. The Beaman Road proposal led to an immediate, intense, and organized resident opposition, including the drafting of a resident-proposed zoning by-law amendments that would prohibit any cannabis cultivation, processing, or manufacturing in a district zoned Residential-Agricultural. The residents submitted their proposed zoning

by-law amendments to the Selectboard, which in accordance with law referred them to the Planning Board for a public hearing, to be followed by a report and recommendation by the Planning Board (see Mass. Gen. L. c. 40A, sec. 5.)

The Planning Board discussed the resident-proposed zoning by-law amendments, and the general issue of regulation of the commercial cultivation, processing, and manufacturing of marijuana. There were three public Planning Board meetings at which concerned residents participated extensively, both in person and through Go-To-Meeting. Concerns and issues raised included, but were not limited to: odor from flowering marijuana plants; water use; wastewater; pesticide and fertilizer use; energy use; light pollution; traffic; security; and potential hazards associated with extraction and processing. The residents opposed to the proposed Beaman Road operation provided information concerning experiences of other municipalities with both outdoor and indoor grow operations.

On the basis of the issues raised during the discussions, the Planning Board decided to draft proposed zoning by-law amendments which would prohibit the commercial cultivation, processing, and/or manufacturing of marijuana in each of Princeton's three zoning districts: Residential-Agricultural, Business, and Business-Industrial. The Planning Board also decided to hold a public hearing on these Planning Board-proposed by-law amendments at the same time as the public hearing on the resident-proposed zoning by-law amendments. Again, this public hearing will be on **Wednesday, January 5, 2022 at 7:30 pm at the Town Hall Annex and via Go-To-Meeting**. Residents can participate in person wearing masks, or through Go-To-Meeting (although residents should be aware that participation through Go-To-Meeting has on occasion been difficult and unreliable). Both the resident-proposed amendments and the Planning Board-proposed amendments are posted on the [Planning Board website](#).

This public hearing is an opportunity for residents to provide feedback on the proposals—to make comments and suggestions, to ask questions, and to express views with regard to the proposed zoning by-law amendments. Receiving input now allows the Planning Board to incorporate that input into the report on the resident-proposed zoning by-law amendments, and to revise the Planning Board-proposed zoning by-law amendments before articles are placed in a warrant for a Town Meeting. Accordingly, the Planning Board encourages as many residents as possible to share views and provide input on the proposed marijuana-related zoning by-law amendments.

Princeton Planning Board


John Mirick, Chair