

TOWN OF CASTLETON
PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL MEETING
Castleton Fire Station
275 Route 30 N
April 11th, 2022, 6:15PM

PRESENT: Michael Finnegan; Moderator, Jim Leamy, Mary Lee Harris, Robert Spaulding, Joe Mark, Richard Combs, Mike Jones, Nedra Boutwell, Janet Currie, Zack Pitzele, Davene Brown, Debora Franzoni. By Zoom: Keith Whitcomb, Phil Lamy, Katy, and Jeff.

The meeting was called to order at 6:15pm by Moderator Michael Finnegan with the Pledge of Allegiance. This is an informational meeting for the reconsideration of article 1, Shall the town authorize cannabis retailers in town pursuant to 7 VSA section 863?

Janet Currie introduced herself and spoke about the three Let's Talk Cannabis meetings she held over the past few weeks. Janet felt the meetings were well attended, she had Professor Lamy from Castleton university speak as well as Castleton Police Chief Peter Mantello.

Davene Brown asked for a synopsis of the meetings. Janet explained Chief Mantello attended the first meeting and addressed safety concerns. The second meeting was attended by Professor Lamy, the director of the cannabis certification program and he spoke in part about the jobs available in the field. The third meeting was attended by the professor that teaches the cultivation class, and she answered a lot of questions in regard to cultivation.

Davine B asked if this is something that can be done illegally? Janet answered that is the point of this is for people to purchase product from licensed growers, manufacturers, and processors. Janet has also looked into hiring a cannabis nurse to work in the retail space. Davine also asked, for someone going through chemo or aches and pains, where do they purchase it? Janet explained that is why she wants to have a retail store so people can come in and ask those questions. The product must be grown in Vermont by a licensed grower, the process is highly stringent.

Danine B asked the board if this is approved will it make it easier for other things, substances, to be approved? Jim L replied retail sales are retail sales, it may. Janet stated she could open other retail sales however would need the voter support for this and it is important for the community to decide this. She feels people should be able to buy what they want, and for it to be safe. There is testing that we have to abide by, a certificate of acceptance, they test for potency, heavy metals and pesticides. This a way that people can get a more controlled and safer product. Professor Phil Lamy spoke in full support of legalizing cannabis in the town. He stated he didn't feel this would lead to opening up other psychosomatic drugs. Robert Spaulding asked Prof. Lamy to speak on the tax revenue potential. His understanding is that one to two percent of the tax would be shared back with the town, he feels it will be passed by the legislature. He stated this is also an opportunity for jobs, an opportunity to take a bite out of crime, and freedom of choice. Bob also asked for an explanation of the 20% tax. Janet explained any product sold will have a 20% tax, 6% is the normal sales tax and 14% is the cannabis tax. This is sitting with the legislature right now as to how it is going to be allocated back to the towns that have opted in.

Joe Mark stated this is an excise tax, some of this is prescribed for substance abuse prevention or treatment and then one to two percent could come back to the towns.

Joe Mark asked Janet about having a nurse in her establishment and to clarify the distinction between retail cannabis and cannabis dispensary. Janet explained at a dispensary the patient has a prescription and does not pay taxes, with retail you do not need a prescription and do pay taxes. When you go to a dispensary you are talking to a bud tender that is making \$16.00 an hour and I'm trying to avoid that. A retail establishment could not fill a prescription.

Mary Lee Harris asked if she walked into her store to purchase something, are there any questions you would ask me before I purchase. Janet replied no.

Richard Combs asked how many employees Janet thought she would employ? Janet stated she has eight now and will probably fill eight more. Dick also commented that these products are purchased for recreation from somewhere, if its from a retailer it will be safe. Janet explained that she also has to have product liability insurance. Prof Lamy also commented that with regulated cannabis you are less likely to have adulterated product, it will be regulated and safer.

Jim L made a motion to adjourn, Dick C seconded. All voted in favor, meeting adjourned at 6:45pm.

Respectfully submitted:

Nedra Boutwell, Town Clerk

Approved: _____ Approved: _____