



CANNABIS WORKGROUP

Cannabis Workgroup Meeting-- Approved Minutes Tuesday, September 26th at 4:30 PM

Hybrid Meeting: C. Vernon Gray Room (CVG) and WebEx

Chair Adibe opened the meeting at 4:41 PM.

Members Present: Stephanie Adibe, Chair; Melanie Bishop, Department of Finance; Joe Dymek, Agricultural Preservation; Jim Daly, Police Department; Tavon Claggett, Fire and Rescue; Roy Chernikoff, Economic Development Authority; Lynda Eisenberg, Department of Planning and Zoning; Maura Rossman and Roe Bonaccorsy, Department of Health; Amanda Mihill, Office of Law; Ciarra Roulhac, State's Attorney's Office; Katherine Yi, District 1; Roslyn Zinner, District 2; J. Guzzone, District 3; Paul Rivers, District 4; and Christopher Maynard, District 5.

Staff Present: Michael Harris, Ashley Alston, Owen Kahn, Roz Hightower, and Theo Wimberly.

Chair Adibe called the roll of Workgroup Members and gave the Members a moment to review the minutes. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Chair Adibe motioned for Mr. Guzzone to be approved as the Workgroup Co-Chair. There was a discussion about the need for a Co-Chair as additional support and to fill in when the Chair is unavailable. Mr. Guzzone was approved as the Workgroup Co-Chair.

Co-Chair Guzzone gave the Workgroup an update on visiting local cannabis dispensaries. Co-Chair Guzzone proposed three options for tours: Revolution Relief in Laurel at either 11 AM or 4 PM Tuesday October 3rd, or Remedy in Columbia at 4 PM Friday October 6th. Co-Chair Guzzone discussed how it would be beneficial to visit different types of businesses in different groups. Chair Adibe confirmed Co-Chair Guzzone will send out options for signing up, and Mr. Wimberly reminded the Workgroup that visits will need to be in small groups to avoid meeting with a quorum of the Workgroup. Co-Chair Guzzone predicted that there will be more opportunities to visit in October. Ms. Zinner asked what the Workgroup would see at these visits and Co-Chair Guzzone said the sales area, the back office, and the vault will be available to Workgroup Members. Co-Chair Guzzone proposed a set question list so that measurable data is collected at each visit.

The Subgroups gave updates on their research.

The Equity Subgroup discussed using County funds for education programs for adult-use cannabis, ways to help social equity businesses retain a medical professional, and employee training, customer experiences, and community education and avoid negative effects of the adult-use cannabis industry. The Subgroup stated their next steps are to visit local businesses and ask questions about equity, and review the social equity applications at the State level.

The Finance Subgroup discussed the role of the Department of Finance in the establishment of on-site consumption facilities, whether or not the Department of Finance has a process to track any revenue received from the State as a result of cannabis sales, and amount of sales tax the County will receive. There was a discussion about the different types of funds that the County can establish and if the County's projected share of the State revenue has increased since sales began in July.

The Health Subgroup discussed their research, including evidence based practices that could be implemented in Howard County, adopting universal level strategies to focus on all aspects of the community, not just youths, education programs in other jurisdictions, labeling requirements and the required font on cannabis labels, ways to prevent addiction and misuse among adult users, the advertising limitations for cannabis businesses, recommendations to change federal laws, and possible public health campaigns. There were questions from the Workgroup about revenue from the State public health funds and the requirements for cannabis packaging.

The Public Safety Subgroup discussed the threat of higher cannabis use in high schools, the possibility of requiring a course for adult-use cannabis consumers and employees, especially for on-site consumption business, what other States do to regulate licenses and education as it relates to public safety, if the County is going to allow on-site consumption facilities, an inspection process of on-site consumption facilities for violations similar to liquor inspections, and traffic stops for potential cannabis use and limitations of breathalyzers. There was a discussion about on-site testing for cannabis use and if the technology exists yet and what the effect of adult-use legalization has had on traffic stops and other public safety measures.

The Zoning Subgroup discussed what cannabis businesses are currently allowed in Howard County zoning districts, including sales, processing, and farming businesses, and on-site consumption facilities with County zoning restrictions. There was a discussion about how there are few options for adult-use outside of single family homes and comparisons to other similar types of businesses like cigar lounges.

The Legislative Subgroup's research was shared with the Workgroup via email.

Mr. Wimberly gave an update on the two cannabis presentations at the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) summer conference, including the major topics discussed and who was there to present. Mr. Wimberly also discussed the upcoming MACo Fall Symposium.

Chair Adibe proposed expanding meeting times until 6 PM and no one expressed any concern.

Chair Adibe closed the meeting at 6:08 PM.

Next Steps:

Finance

Create recommendations for the County to decide how revenue from state taxation can be distributed.

Health

Research best practices for health and safety standards for cultivation to inform the Council, and have the Council lobby the State delegation for further existing authority.

Public Safety

Initiatives to prevent cannabis use by individuals < 21, including school -based programs.

Legislative

Research data of dispensaries based on population and market demand; Howard County may be eligible for up to 3 additional dispensaries.

Zoning

Data to reflect the recommendations are not unduly burdening to the business (map example) Data to show the zoning requirements are not more burdensome than those imposed on other similar business (example: alcohol and tobacco).

Equity

Get more information on the medical professional requirement for dispensaries, visiting currently opened dispensaries, look more into the social equity programs and grants that are being offered by the state, and get in communications with Office of Social Equity if MCA.