

## TNP Marijuana Committee 4/7/22

Present: Ginger Katz (Courage to Speak), Diamond Sead (Human Services Council & parent), Nina Chanana (project evaluator), Anamilena Moreno (Norwalk ACTS), Denise Rollinson (Norwalk CHC), Margaret Watt (Positive Directions & parent), Diana Revolus (Common Council, business owner), Josh Goldstein (Common Council Ordinance Committee)

1. Welcomes
  - a. Denise - support youth & community by making marijuana sales as safe as possible:
    - i. No grab & go marijuana
    - ii. Effects on medication
    - iii. Signage
    - iv. Risk factors such as impact on pregnancy
2. Update by Margaret & Ginger on our meetings with a social equity applicant for Norwalk
  - a. Matt Epstein is a former hedge fund manager with a business background who is backing a social equity candidate (high school friend of his) and is interested in opening in Norwalk
  - b. As a father of 3 and in the interest of creating allies, he wants to help make cannabis sales safer, for example, use of technology to scan consumers: match face to ID, keep a copy on site.
    - i. Privacy issue with that type of surveillance. We acknowledge that it does work as a deterrent but it's also scary.
    - ii. Example of the "wall of shame" (confiscated IDs) at package store on CT Ave
  - c. Suggests starting to work with credit card companies so that when they eventually are allowed for purchasing cannabis, they can include a % for prevention.
  - d. Makes sense to keep talking with him. Be strategic and ethical
  - e. Employment: he would hire people full-time with full health benefits
    - i. Importance of consideration to equity
3. Update by Josh Goldstein on City efforts
  - a. Determination of licenses is done by the state
    - i. 12 total licenses to be given out this first round - ½ are social equity, intended to give someone a leg up
      1. Applicant must have 65% of the social equity - must live now or lived for a certain period of time in a neighborhood that was disproportionately affected by the criminalization of MJ. In Norwalk that's all of SoNo and part of East Norwalk
      - ii. Norwalk may not be able to specify that they want a social equity candidate
  - b. P&Z and Ordinance and Health Dept are creating a map overlaying liquor stores & substance use clinics - to try to identify hot spots and avoid creating public health risks
    - i. Norwalk can only have 3 cannabis establishments. (Laws around alcohol density are very different.)
    - ii. Zoning is trying to counterbalance the risks with the potential financial benefits
      1. Comments about the irony of getting 3% in municipal taxes though risks could cost much more.
      2. The 3% is in state law, not in the purview of Norwalk
  - c. 2-pronged approach:

- i. P&Z Commission (not Common Council) is working to develop an amendment of the zoning regs to make cannabis more similar to liquor laws: where can they be located, hours of operation, signage (including signs), advertising, etc.
  - ii. Ordinance Committee of Common Council will deal with the 3% in funding & how to use it. Possibly establish a Trust so it doesn't get put in the General Fund and use can really be monitored. Ordinance will provide overall guidelines for transferring the money into the Trust.
  - iii. State law provides for 6 specific uses of the 3% in funding: Streetscaping, Youth employment/ JRB, Services for formerly incarcerated, SU recovery , Community services... not prevention per se.
    - 1. Potentially City could use some of the recovery funding for prevention
  - iv. City acknowledges need to fund public health campaign around cannabis. Health Dept is looking at that as something they would do (sounds like in the future, after retail sales start and some of the 3% of municipal revenue is available)
    - 1. Margaret reached out to health dept about collaborating on a public awareness campaign around the health risks of marijuana for youth but they didn't have any funding. There are health materials being developed by prevention groups around the state and WPC will be working on some locally.
  - v. NPD has reached out to police depts in Mass for advice
  - vi. Margaret comment re: 3% in funding- will be interesting to see how the state plans to monitor how business are doing in terms of revenue and whether they're accurately assessing taxes since cannabis businesses are cash / credit union, not credit cards
- d. Ordinance is planning a public hearing on the ordinance by end of May / early June. Purpose to inform people about the state law & explain how they're looking at the roll-out in Norwalk, and to listen to input. (P&Z Dept has its own separate hearings. Both are hoping to get done by end of summer.)
- e. Not expecting a referendum or ballot vote.
- i. Diana noted importance of buy-in
4. Billboard in Norwalk
- a. There is a billboard on Westport Ave for a medical MJ dispensary located in Stamford. It's on the left side of Westport Ave going toward Westport, near Bright Beginnings preschool, McDonald's, movie theater, gym, Carter's... so not in compliance with law stating 90% of viewers must be 21yo+
  - b. It's posted by Lamar, the advertising company that has been a bad actor in this since the new law passed. Multiple complaints about this statewide (esp Webster Bank arena) but they haven't taken their ads down. The other 2 major advertising agencies in CT that have received complaints about billboards out of compliance with the CT cannabis law have taken them down.
  - c. This is an example of one of the enforcement problems presented by the law. Whose responsibility is it to monitor every billboard and ad? Probably not NPD, but state isn't going to check every community.
5. ACTIONS:
- a. Reach out to P&Z (Steve Kleppin) - Margaret/Diamond
  - b. Check back in with Health Dept - Margaret
  - c. Re billboard:

- i. Everyone reach out to Attorney General's office. Margaret or Larry will send photo to include.
- ii. Josh will see if there's anything that Norwalk can do.