

State lawmakers want talks to begin for 2017 transportation bill

By HILLARY BORRUD
Capital Bureau

PORTLAND — State lawmakers said on Monday that they need to begin negotiations now if they are going to pass legislation to fund transportation in 2017. The lawmakers — state Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose; Rep. John Davis, R-Wilsonville; Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario; and Rep. Caddy McKeown, D-Coos Bay — were on a panel at the Oregon Business Plan Leadership Summit in Portland.

The four lawmakers were all part of a bipartisan group dubbed the “Gang of Eight” who met with Gov. Kate Brown during the legislative session to hammer out a transportation funding proposal. Lawmakers and the governor scrapped the proposal in June after Oregon Department of Transportation director Matthew Garrett revealed during a public hearing on the plan that it would result in a smaller carbon emissions reduction than originally projected.

Brown also said on Monday that she based her decision to defer action on a transportation package in part on the plan by the petroleum and trucking industries to seek a 2016 ballot measure to repeal the state’s low-carbon fuel standard. On Monday, the lawmakers said the short timeline this year made it difficult to negotiate a proposal with broad support, and one of the lessons was to set aside more time to develop the next plan.

Davis said he was discouraged to hear people suggest the Legislature wait until 2017 to negotiate a transportation funding package. “I think the first thing is, we start,” Davis said.

Davis, whose suburban constituents deal with traffic congestion during their

commutes, said lawmakers need to start putting forward straw proposals, so that various interests have time to debate the pros and cons.

McKeown also said the Legislature needs to invest time in negotiating a transportation package. “I think we’re going to need that year to be able to bring something together that would be palatable to our constituents,” McKeown said.

Johnson said that in order to produce successful transportation funding bills, the state must continue to include representatives from around the state.

“It was in that spirit of collaboration that we worked pretty diligently,” Johnson said. “Time was not our friend and we eventually ran out of time ... It was collegial, it was cooperative. We were there as Oregonians.”

“I think it’s time for all of us to get back in the room” and start negotiating, said Johnson, whose constituents are currently dealing with storm damage to the transportation system.

Bentz said a key goal for lawmakers is to craft a proposal that has broad support and a minimal chance of being referred to the ballot. “That takes time,” Bentz said.

Bentz is trying to line up funding to repair the route to a diatomaceous earth mine in his district that, together with the processing plant, employees more than 100 people.

The Capital Bureau is a collaboration between EO Media Group and Pamplin Media Group.



State Sen. Betsy Johnson

City of Cannon Beach still mulling dispensary decision

It could be months before a marijuana dispensary vote

By DANI PALMER
EO Media Group

CANNON BEACH — City councilors indicated they are likely to draft time, place and manner restrictions for marijuana sales, but they are not ready for a decision yet.

Despite the success of Measure 91 allowing recreational sale and possession of small amounts of marijuana — approved by 63 percent of Cannon Beach voters in November 2014 — the city only licenses businesses which abide by local, state and federal law, which excludes cannabis.

Failure to enact licensing rules could put the city at risk of litigation, City Attorney Tammy Herdener said.

Other municipalities have been sued over similar inaction, she said.

Councilor Mike Benefield said he leaned toward giving residents the chance to opt out of marijuana sales through a ballot measure next November. He said the result might differ from 2014.

“Maybe the reason the vote was so high wasn’t that they wanted to have a dispensary or a store or a crop,” Benefield said. Proponents “just wanted to be able to go to Seaside and get a joint and not get arrested for it.”

Councilor George Vetter said it doesn’t “make sense to go back to the voters.”

“It seems to me that would be a waste of time and money and is kind of like saying, ‘You made a bad decision, now we’ll give you a chance to correct it,’” Vetter said.

‘It seems to me that would be a waste of time and money and is kind of like saying, ‘You made a bad decision, now we’ll give you a chance to correct it.’’

George Vetter

Cannon Beach city councilor, on opt-out vote

He noted a marijuana business would not survive in Cannon Beach without demand.

Opposition to licensing

Marlene Laws, a resident, voiced her opposition to licensing dispensaries.

Cannon Beach is a beautiful area known for being family and dog friendly, Laws said, and secondhand marijuana smoke causes illness in children and pets. She cited risks to children and studies indicating increased accident rates associated with marijuana use. She also expressed concern over the security of marijuana shops.

“We need to preserve the image of Cannon Beach,” Laws said, adding Seaside, with two dispensaries, is a short drive away.

Steve Hudgik, a retired marketing specialist and pastor of the Cannon Beach Bible Church, said numbers in Colorado and other states indicating an uptick in tourism following marijuana legalization were misleading.

Hudgik questioned if marijuana would enhance “the Cannon Beach experience” and noted it is important not to rush a decision because “once it’s here, you’re not going to get rid of it.”

Support for marijuana

Sam Chapman, founding partner of New Economy Consulting, said he wants to open a marijuana shop with family members as employees. He said he chose Cannon Beach because of its atmosphere.

Chapman said he wants to address the stigma of marijuana and believes a dispensary could bring in additional tourism with an “emerging cannabis industry.”

He said he is looking at potential dispensary locations and one business owner has already given approval.

Now, Chapman said, it is up to the city to make a decision.

Resident Jan Siebert-Wahrmund said marijuana is actually not that different from alcohol. “I don’t use it myself, I don’t drink alcohol, but I think people have the right to do so,” Siebert-Wahrmund added, pointing to Cannon Beach’s voter approval of Measure 91.

The rules

The Oregon Liquor Control Commission is in the process of adopting rules for recreational cannabis use due in January.

“This is really a moving animal,” Herdener said.

There are already limitations in place. Dispensaries must be located more than 1,000 feet from schools. Oregon residents are allowed to grow up to four plants for personal use without a license and may carry an ounce of marijuana on their

person in public, but may not consume it in public places such as hotels, the beach or on the street, Herdener said.

Herdener said the city could impose its own “reasonable restrictions,” like dispensary hours, distance from parks and more in drafting a licensing ordinance.

Mayor Sam Steidel questioned whether the school run by the Christian Conference Center would be included in that 1,000-foot buffer area around dispensaries. If it is, he added, there would be few lots available meeting those criteria.

Herdener said the buffer requirement does not apply to preschools and Bible schools. She said staff are seeking guidance because it will take work to prepare a ballot measure.

Even if the council decides to go with the November 2016 vote, Herdener added, staff will have to draft regulations in case residents don’t opt out.

City Planner Mark Barnes said it would take four months to go through the adoption process, so the city would need to come to a decision next spring.

An opt-out of marijuana sales would prevent Cannon Beach from receiving state taxes on sales, he added.

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