

Klickitat County will review marijuana moratorium

By SVERRE BAKKE
The Enterprise

The question of continuing a moratorium on the production, processing, and retail sale of marijuana in unincorporated Klickitat County will be put to the board of commissioners during an April 14 public hearing in Goldendale.

The County Board adopted an ordinance on Oct. 21, 2014, that prohibits the establishment of new marijuana businesses outside the limits of the county's three incorporated cities. By law, the County Board must hold a hearing every six months to determine if the public supports continuing the ban for another six months. The current moratorium expires April 21.

County officials say the purpose of the hearing "is to solicit public input and comment from interested parties on the possible extension of the moratorium for another six months."

County commissioners

could decide on April 14 to let the ban expire, adopt findings of fact in support of an extension, or continue the matter for further discussion. The hearing will begin at 1:30 p.m.

County Planning Director Curt Dreyer said renewing the ban for six months is just one option provided to the County Board under state law.

"As with the prior hearings on the matter, I suspect both sides of the issue will be eager to voice their opinions and desire for a final decision favorable to their respective positions," Dreyer said.

The County Board enacted a six-month moratorium on marijuana businesses in late 2013. During a hearing on its continuation in April 2014, one person spoke for a ban or stricter local regulations, while more than 30 testified against county regulations because the state already had stiff regulations in place to protect the

public.

County commissioners elected to let the moratorium lapse. In that vacuum, some growers, processors, and retailers here became vested in the system regulated by the state Liquor Control Board (LCB). The county's Oct. 21, 2014 moratorium did not impact these businesses, which also would not be subject to any new county regulations.

Last fall's county ban on marijuana businesses came in response to public comments the County Board received throughout last summer and fall on regular meeting days. Concerns cited included the LCB's lack of notification requirements to neighboring property owners or the public at large.

Concurrent to the board's ongoing review, the Planning Commission is conducting its own review of county regulations to determine if code amendments should be enacted to apply

to the different marijuana businesses that Washington's voter-approved Initiative 502 has brought forth as part of an evolving regional economy.

So far, the Planning Commission has conducted workshops with new Sheriff Bob Songer and new Prosecuting Attorney David Quesnel. Dreyer said planning commissioners "have not developed any proposed amendments, let alone a consensus of a general direction."

Dreyer noted that during the workshop with Songer "there was some leaning toward proposal of a permanent ban." He said it was suggested the Planning Commission could hold two public hearings (one on each side of the county) and, based on testimony, recommend a permanent ban to the County Board, or continue to develop amendments applicable to growing, processing, and retail sales of marijuana.

One idea that surfaced in discussion was to designate a new zone for marijuana businesses, or to allow them in specific existing zones, such as, agricultural zones for growing and processing, and processing in industrial zones).

In any event, the Planning Commission would have to conduct a properly noticed hearing to take public testimony.

"At this point, there is no proposal on which the public could comment," Dreyer said.

However, the Planning Commission is becoming versed in the local history of the subject. Dreyer said he has provided each member with minutes of County Board meetings and hearings, "so they have a sense of the contentiousness of the issue."

But just holding a Planning Commission hearing for the sake of holding a hearing would not be productive, he said.

"If we were to conduct a hearing simply to gather public opinion, they would hear the same arguments from both sides and still be no closer to a recommendation to the board of commissioners than they are now," Dreyer said.

As additional tools, Dreyer plans to provide planning commissioners with ordinances from eight counties that adopted local regulations to allow growing, processing, and retail sales of marijuana; county ordinances that treat marijuana as an agricultural product; and a Chelan County resolution that recognizes I-502 as a state program and bans acceptance of applications for marijuana businesses.

Said Dreyer, "I hope that the examples of what other counties have enacted will help the Planning Commission discuss our own zoning regulations and how they might be tweaked to accommodate the new type of uses."



Photo courtesy of SCEMS

STEVENSON CAR CRASH

Skamania County Emergency Medical Services responded to a vehicle accident in the 1100 block of SW Rock Creek Drive in Stevenson at 12:33 p.m. on Saturday, April 4. Crews arrived to find a small sedan approximately 40 feet over the embankment on the south side of the roadway. The vehicle was occupied with one driver, a 40-year-old female, who was entangled and entrapped in the vehicle. Crews performed heavy extrication to free her from the vehicle and a ropes system to raise the injured patient up the hill to the roadway. She was transported with lights and sirens to a landing zone at Stevenson Elementary School and transferred to Life Flight. Life Flight transported her to Peace Health Southwest Medical Center. SCEMS, Skamania County Fire District No. 2, SCFD No. 1 and Skamania County Sheriff's Office were on scene.

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Pioneer Pizza moving forward with plan for outdoor service

By SVERRE BAKKE
The Enterprise

The White Salmon City Council dedicated portions of both of its March meeting to a discussion with Pioneer Pizza owner Christiaan Erasmus about his plan to provide a dedicated but table-less outdoor serving area for customers of his Jewett Boulevard establishment on the north side's upper sidewalk.

Erasmus indicated on March 18 his plan for outdoor service must comply with Washington Liquor Control Board regulations and federal Americans with Disabilities Act access requirements. Because liquor may be served there between 3 and 11 p.m. most days, the area will have to be blocked off on both ends, yet provide a clear 42-inch path into and out of the designated service area.

Pioneer Pizza staked out its intent in early March when it installed two wooden tables

next to the railing opposite its entrance. Questions about whether they were legal or required additional permitting were put to city officials before the March 1 meeting. Erasmus appeared before the council that night to address any questions.

Erasmus said his customers are demanding the extra service and he wishes to provide it because, in his mind, "it's a money-maker."

"I have talked to a lot of people about this, and all feel it is good for the town, because it gives a leg up on Hood River," Erasmus said, plus, like Henni's sidewalk dining in the next block of Jewett, "it looks cool."

He added, "Pioneer needs to have a presence on the sidewalk in the summer. It's the Northwest."

David Dierck of the Inn of the White Salmon and Doug Ellenberger of Everybody's Brewing both spoke in favor of

Erasmus' plan.

"I believe outside dining is good for business, and good for the town," Dierck said, speaking in terms of more business and more employment in the downtown commercial district.

Ellenberger said having an establishment with outdoor seating "shows there's life in town when people are passing through."

"Anything that helps drum up business in town, I'm for it," he said.

Police Chief Tracy Wyckoff expressed his concern that Pioneer Pizza is bringing a more boisterous environment "where people are a little more on the sporting side"

outside onto the sidewalk. "With the way it's set up, it seems it will be more of an outdoor drinking area than a wine-and-food establishment," he said, referring to the current layout of bars and benches.

Wyckoff noted that in his more than two years as chief of police, the department has had more noise complaints about Pioneer Pizza than any other establishment in Bingen or White Salmon. Wyckoff wanted to be assured Pioneer managers are going to monitor the behavior in and use of the sidewalk area to make sure "it's not going to be a problem for the police department."

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