

# Q & A with OLCC Chair Rob Patridge on Marijuana

The Commissioner discusses diversity, lessons from Colorado and opening your business

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Of *The Skanner News*



Rob Patridge

Rob Patridge sits as chair of the Oregon Liquor Control Commission five-citizen board, charged in part with the task of creating Oregon's rules of regulation for the soon-to-be legal marijuana industry.

While July 1 marks the date for the beginning of legal possession and consumption, the OLCC won't actually begin accepting business licensing applications until Jan. 4 next year and must come up with the rules before then.

The day before the the board of commissioners was scheduled to convene for the first time since wrapping an 11-date tour of

restrictive amount of licenses.

So I'm not sure from that standpoint how anybody would be barred based on ethnicity, race, or anything related to that.

Is that kind of what you're talking about?

**TSN:** More specifically in adopting these rules and regulations, is there going to be any sort of language that says a specific amount of minorities and/or women

must get licensed or so on?

**RP:** We have not. We're still in the process or making the rules. We don't even have a draft set of rules. I'm not aware of any requests for preference in the 10 meetings that I attended (which lacked diversity). That hasn't necessarily been brought to my attention. It could have been to others' attention. But I certainly have told staff that I want to make sure that there's outreach to minority

communities.

**TSN:** Has there been any language [circulated] around people who may have been convicted with marijuana-related crimes will have a fair shot in the industry as well?

**RP:** That's certainly been brought to our attention, and we're certainly going to consider it in the rulemaking process, what a background check should require. How long of a peri-

od someone has been crime free? What were the crimes per-se that were committed by the person? All those things are going to be talked about and I encourage people who have input on it to let us know. It's similar to what we do with liquor licensing, looking at their background to see what kind of licensing would that be allowed to have and not?

that they're sorting through the applicants and weeding through them now.

**TSN:** No pun intended?

**RP:** No pun intended, sure.

**TSN:** Do you know how diverse the applicant pool was in terms of race and geography?

**RP:** It's been kind of a

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public listening sessions across the state for marijuana, Tom Burns, the OLCC marijuana policy advisor was fired after sharing a draft of an internal policy with a Portland lawyer and then allegedly lying about it. Will Higgins, director of licensing, will serve in Burns' place until a permanent replacement is found.

*The Skanner News* spoke with Patridge just days before Burns' ousting in a half-hour long conversation to clarify what role diversity will play in the OLCC's rulemaking, lessons learned from Colorado's marijuana rollout, and ensuring a healthy free market in Oregon.

**The Skanner News:** First thing I wanted to ask is how is this citizen advisory committee coming along?

**Rob Patridge:** We've given Steve Marks the executive director [of the OLCC] the authority to do that. I know that we had over 500 applicants. I think

hands-off what people send in [for the application]. Obviously with their contact information we could see where they're from. But in terms of their race and ethnicity, we didn't ask that.

The commissioners were actively involved but I think we're going to send out a staff memo with recommendations that we will ultimately turn over to the legislature. We've already given some of that report to the legislature.

**TSN:** One of the main things people of color are concerned about is that Black people and women get a fair shake in the industry. Is there anything that has been discussed around ensuring minorities and women are not left out as they have been in so many other emerging industries, such as the technology field?

**RP:** I can't speak for the rest of the OLCC—but my intent is to not have a



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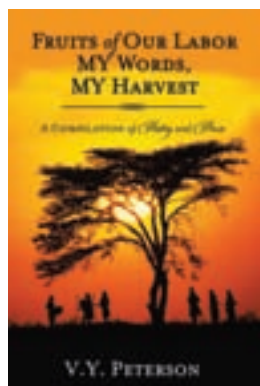


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