

Views from the Rock

Late to the party, cannabis arrives in Cannon Beach

Exhale. The wait is finally over. More than three years since the passage of Oregon's Measure 91 legalizing recreational cannabis, the city saw its first retail cannabis dispensaries open without fanfare Thursday, Dec. 14.

In an elegant wood-frame building with matching interior decor, customers can pick up flowers, edibles, concentrates and pre-rolls. Described alternately as a "craft cannabis dispensary" and "your Pacific Northwest premium provider," shoppers at Five Zero Trees are invited to choose between Blue Dream, Poochie Love, Magic Durban Poison or dozens more.

Oregrown, a little more than a block to the north, is likely to be the second to open its doors.

What took so long?

Measure 4-179

Despite seven licensed cannabis dispensaries in Astoria and six in Seaside, one in Manzanita and one in Wheeler, Cannon Beach residents came late to the game.

When Oregon voters — including 63 percent of residents of Cannon Beach — approved the retail sale of recreational pot in 2014, they gave communities the ability to opt out.

A petition signed by 155 residents brought prohibition to the ballot in November 2016. The threat of denial was enough to stall would-be cannabis retailers, even as neighboring communities saw a surge in activity.

In the interim period before the vote, city councilors restricted marijuana sales to three separate commercial zones.

Under the ordinance, retailers could operate downtown from Ecola Creek south to Washington Street, midtown from Harrison Street south to Elliot Way and in Tolovana Park from Delta Street south to the Sandcastle condominiums. Cannon Beach voters also approved a 3 percent local tax on recreational marijuana sales to support public safety.

Meanwhile, Measure 4-179 to ban marijuana sales in Cannon Beach failed in November 2016 by a narrow 51 percent to 49 percent margin, with 446 against prohibition and 436 in its favor.

A mere 10-vote difference, but enough to give entrepreneurs the green light.

Starts and stops

Sam Chapman of New Economy Consulting appeared before the council in 2016 announcing his intention to open a dispensary but never applied for a business license. Through his company, he continues to focus on advising entrepreneurs and investors, as well as consulting for political campaigns.

A planned dispensary at 3115 S. Hemlock St. abandoned its land-use application after a rejection by the Design Review Board in August.

Owner Daryl Bell, who owns dispensaries in Lincoln, Coos and Tillamook counties, went before the Design Review Board to seek approvals for his proposed Tolovana dispensary. Bell provided plans for exterior building and landscaping upgrades, but the board asked for a more detailed plan for the property.

Bell proposed exterior painting, window modifications and landscaping ideas, but the board wasn't satisfied. Bell was granted a continuance and asked to return in October with revised plans.



Employees Travis Flagel, Josh Jensen and manager Josh Cisco stand at the counter at Five Zero Trees. Cannon Beach's first cannabis store opened Dec. 14.

CANNON SHOTS

R.J. MARX



When he failed to appear or submit revisions, his application was rejected.

Nancy Benson, operations manager of PPC Holdings, said in late December changes requested just weren't worth it and they did not intend to pursue the application.

Oregrown

This summer, store owner Abbas Atwi sold the building at 215 South Hemlock — for 14 years, home to the Purple Moon Boutique — to Justin Crown, Aviv Hadar, Kevin Hogan and Hunter Neubauer of Oregrown Industries.

Described as "Oregon's premier farm-to-table vertically integrated cannabis company," the four men, each in their early 30s, founded their company in 2013 with the goal of setting the bar for the emerging recreational market in Oregon, according to Cascade Business News.

Oregrown's flagship store in Bend opened as a medical dispensary about four years ago.

The owners said they wanted to expand their business to Cannon Beach because of its natural beauty, which meshes with the company's Oregon outdoors lifestyle brand, they told the Gazette in July.

Their No. 1 priority is to go through proper channels to make sure it will fit in with the aesthetic and the culture of the town,

This summer, the Design Review Board approved Oregrown's request to modify signage, door color and window display restrictions.

Oregrown has a marijuana retail license from the Oregon Liquor Control Commission for a dispensary in Bend but not in Cannon Beach.

Until they receive liquor control commission approval — a process described as backlogged for months — they await licensing as the city's second retail cannabis dispensary.

Owners are hoping for spring. "Oregrown is incredibly excited to bring our authentic lifestyle brand to Cannon Beach," Oregrown's Amanda Moore said Tuesday. "Many of us grew up learning how to surf on the Oregon coast."

Moore said Oregrown is hoping to have a soft opening in place by the beginning of April. "We really cannot wait to bring a taste of Oregrown to our home away from home."

Future challenges?

Even with two shops planned and more likely, opponents of retail dispensaries in the downtown area say the pot shops are not compatible with the city's goals.

Five Zero Trees summer opening into the former location of the home decor and design store Fruffels at 140 S. Hemlock St. was delayed after the Ecola Square Homeowners Association, spearheaded by David Frei, sought a denial of their business license, citing concerns about the application process and inconsistencies with the city's comprehensive plan.

Frei argued approving Five Zero Trees at the Hemlock location would take away a mixed-use building with three apartments, "eliminating apartments in affordable housing-challenged Cannon Beach."

Councilors voted 3-2 to maintain the ordinance, which prohibits marijuana stores in mixed-use buildings to adhere to the community's desire to keep marijuana out of residential areas.

The building meets the city code for a marijuana store because the residents have since moved out and is no longer mixed-use.

In a Nov. 28 memo to the mayor and councilors, City Land Use Attorney Bill Kabeiseman wrote: "While some might find that marijuana facilities are fully consistent with having a strong 'quality of life,' the question of how to implement the vision statement is a policy question for which the City Council, informed by the voters, has the final authority."

City ordinances do not violate provisions of the comprehensive plan — particularly the values of fostering community, small-town atmosphere and a sense of safety — "merely because they allow for marijuana facilities in the city."

Although the city could choose to interpret the provisions as the opponents of the marijuana facility suggested, nothing in the comprehensive plan mandates such an approach and the city has not violated its comprehensive plan in allowing marijuana facilities in the downtown area, Kabeiseman wrote.

The topic will likely arise during the re-evaluation of the comprehensive plan as part of next year's strategic planning.

"Cannabis is a substance that can transcend all genders, religion, lifestyle — it brings different values to different people," Five Zero Trees co-owner Case Van Dorne said in June. "If we can provide this experience in a safe mechanism, that's fulfilling."



The annual Christmas letter, a holiday tradition.

Not a fan of the holiday letter

Has anybody else noticed a sea change in the Christmas letter? You know, those holiday missives that arrive with a Christmas card, the one, sometimes two, or even three-page printout detailing all the sender's news of the year, every tidbit about their family, including news of work, marriages, travel, new grandchildren, divorce, abdominal surgery, root canal. So far this year all the Christmas letters I've received have been via email. So glad more people are getting on board going paperless.

VIEW FROM THE PORCH
EVE MARX



I have to say I've never been a fan of the Christmas letter. For starters, why are they always so long? Also as a barista friend recently said, it takes an enormous ego to think anyone else wants to know all this stuff.

My principal peeve about Christmas letters is that element of bombastic bragging. For example, as I struggle to figure out another way to serve chicken after 40-some years of making chicken, I'm supposed to be happy to read about your two weeks in France? Or your daughter got engaged this fall? Nice. Well, so did my son. Does that mean I'm expected to commune with you over lattes to exchange Bridezilla stories? I sure hope not.

My husband has a relative who authors his family's annual Christmas letter. We used to live a half-hour's drive away from this relative, but in 25 years we only physically got together twice. He's a nice enough guy, but that should tell you something. I am aware he and his wife have two daughters and one got married and had a child and then got divorced. I can't recall if the other daughter married. I think not. For years, this man's Christmas letter has been packed with breezy news of canoe trips, camping trips, the annual pilgrimage they make to California to visit his in-laws. In later years, the letters detailed his wife's various surgeries and medical procedures, including cataract surgery and a knee and then a hip replacement.

In my family, my stepsister's husband is the Christmas letter writer. He styles his writing after Garrison Keillor, the Lake Wobegon dude, which given Keillor's current #Me, Too troubles, may not be the best writer to emulate. Some years his Christmas letter is kind of grim. For example, two years ago he described in detail his battle with high blood pressure, and last year it was his mother's cancer treatment. This year he devoted two single-space typed pages to their kitchen renovation. After a few years of bad news, I was relieved.

Regrettably, I don't think the Christmas letter is going away. Many folks are sentimental about sending and receiving them. I'm thinking the time might be ripe to replace it with the New Year's Resolution letter. Possibly putting one's resolutions down in writing and sending them to a dozen or so of one's closest friends is the best way to make those resolutions stick, especially the resolution I make every year, which is to start a diet. My resolution for 2018 is to try to be more kindly towards the Christmas letter and not groan when one appears in my mailbox. After all, somebody did take the time to write and send one (even if I don't want to read it).

Consider the use of lodging taxes to fund essential services

This is a strange world, both locally and nationally. The purpose of this column is to call your attention to the insanity, provoke you and perhaps suggest possible alternative solutions.

So, we should approve a 40 percent increase in our water bills over a four-year period?

Cannon Beach is a different sort of town. We have maybe 2,500 year-round residents and an additional 30,000-plus in the summertime. Now, where exactly does the problem come up? I'm willing to bet that it isn't with supplying 2,500

GUEST COLUMN

JOHN HUISMANN



people with water and sewer. The problem comes with providing the other 30,000 with essential services.

Here's a novel idea, why not let the visitors pay the cost of providing those services to them? It could be accomplished by raising water rates for all hotels and vacation rental units. The alternative would be to

simply add a sewer and water tax to all hotels and rental units. Does this make sense to you?

Hotels are going to immediately complain that their room taxes are already quite high, so let's consider an alternative. Let's stop spending room tax money on print advertising to get more people here. Use that money instead to fund essential services like sewer and water. We already have more visitors than this town can handle in the summer. Using social media to advertise instead will bring us more visitors than we need and the cost is far cheaper than

print advertising.

Do yourself a favor and let your representatives know where you stand. It is the only way to prevent a raise in your already high water bills.

On a totally different topic, I have to ask why we don't compensate our city representatives. They give a lot of their time on a monthly basis trying to do their best to serve us. It's not just the meetings they attend, but all of the time that they spend listening to us and preparing for meetings. What is reasonable compensation? I'm not sure yet.

What do you think?

Please feel free to respond to what you read here. I can't promise a personal reply, but I will use your thoughts to contribute to our discourse here.

John Huismann has lived in Cannon Beach for more than 10 years. He's "almost a native" as he first moved to Portland in 1976. His experience includes years of sales, marketing and management of sales forces. Now retired, he wants to encourage discourse on a variety of subjects His email is oneblessed-man@q.com.

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