



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

**560 Jefferson Boulevard
Warwick, Rhode Island 02886**

Cannabis Control Commission

Open Meeting Minutes

DATE: Friday June 28, 2024
TIME: 12:30 PM
PLACE: Public Utilities Commission
89 Jefferson Boulevard
Warwick, RI 02886

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Kimberly R. Ahern, Esq.
Commissioner Robert B. Jacquard, Esq.
Commissioner Olayiwola Oduyingbo, Esq.

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Michelle Reddish, MS, MPH, Administrator, Cannabis Office
Mariana Ormonde, Esq., Chief of Legal Services, Cannabis
Control Commission
Kelsey McQueeney, Administrative Officer, Cannabis Control
Commission
Carla Aveledo, Esq., Policy Liaison and Legal Support, Cannabis
Control Commission
Christina Schulz, Data Analyst, Executive Office of Health and
Human Services
Rebecca Bucci, Chief Data Analyst, Executive Office of Health
and Human Services

Chairperson Ahern called the meeting to order at 12:30 pm.

The first item of business was:

Introductory remarks from Chairperson Ahern, which included:

- Highlighted that June is Pride Month.

- Noted the formal observance of Juneteenth as a formal state holiday for the first time in Rhode Island history.
- Highlighted the 80th anniversary of the D-Day invasion of Normandy, and noted that the Rhode Island Cannabis Act specifically includes veterans with respect to market participation in the cannabis industry.

The next item of business was:

Motion to approve the minutes of the Open Session Meeting held on May 31, 2024.

Upon motion made by Commissioner Jacquard and duly seconded by Commissioner Oduyingbo, it was unanimously

VOTED: To approve the minutes of the open session meeting held on May 31, 2024.

The next item of business was:

Introduction of Michelle A. Reddish, MS, MPH, the inaugural Administrator of the Cannabis Office, which included:

- Chairperson Ahern welcomed Michelle Reddish, the inaugural Administrator of the Cannabis Office.
- Administrator Reddish briefly spoke to her prior experience and noted her excitement toward serving in Rhode Island.

The next item of business was:

Presentation on the analysis of the data required in the Rhode Island Cannabis Act § 21-28.11-3(23) concerning disproportionately impacted areas as it relates to social equity applicants, which included:

- Christina Schulz, Data Analyst for the Office of Health and Human Services and Rebecca Bucci, Chief Data Analyst for the Office of Health and Human Services, gave a presentation on the analysis of each data set related to the criteria forth in the statutory definition of disproportionately impacted areas as that term relates to social equity applicants.
- Analysts noted that the data was collected by Commission staff and analyzed by the Office of Health and Human Services, and included that:
 - The data reflected that the cities of Central Falls, Providence and Woonsocket met the criteria set forth in the Rhode Island Cannabis Act concerning poverty rate.
 - The data reflected that the cities of Central Falls, Providence and Woonsocket met the criteria set forth in the Cannabis Act concerning percentage of children eligible to participate in the federal free lunch

program.

- The data reflected that the cities of Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence and Woonsocket met the criteria set forth in the Cannabis Act concerning households in the area receiving SNAP benefits.
- The data reflected that the city of Woonsocket met the criteria set forth in the Cannabis Act concerning unemployment rates.
 - It was noted that New Shoreham would also meet the criteria, but explained that this result was likely due to the seasonal nature of employment on the island.
- The data reflected that Bristol, Central Falls, Charlestown, East Providence, Gloucester, Hopkinton, Jamestown, Little Compton, Middletown, Narragansett, Newport, Portsmouth, Richmond, Smithfield, Warren, West Greenwich, Westerly and Woonsocket met the criteria set forth in the Cannabis Act concerning disparate enforcement of cannabis prohibition.
- The analysts explained the presentation of census tract data for some criteria and municipality level data for other criteria, explaining that certain data sets were unavailable at the census tract level and therefore all the data sets could not be compared or presented at the census tract level.
 - Specifically, the data sets for participation in the federal free lunch program and the criminal justice data were not able to be analyzed at census tract level.
- The analysts provided a chart that listed Rhode Island municipalities and reflected the total number of criteria met by each municipality based on the data analysis.
 - It was noted that this chart reflected that Woonsocket met all five criteria, Central Falls met four criteria, Providence met three criteria, and all other municipalities met either one or no criteria.

The Commission discussed the presentation, which included:

- Noting that how, with the inclusion and layering of more criteria, the areas of impact become much more focused.
- Thoughts on communicating to potential applicants how many criteria will be necessary to meet in the application process.
- Thoughts on communicating to potential applicants that future social equity retail locations do not need to be located in those areas that are ultimately determined to be disproportionately impacted areas.
- Noted that the Cannabis Advisory Board would also receive the presentation and information contained therein and would have time to discuss, vote, and provide recommendations to the Commission.

The next item of business was:

Public Comment:

Three people provided public comment, which included:

- Requested more retail stores be opened as soon as possible.
- Welcomed Administrator Reddish to Rhode Island and the cannabis industry.
- Gave thoughts on a merit-based system for selected of licensees.
- Requested a timeline for the publication of regulations and the opening of the licensing application process.
- Requested more information on the qualifications needed for future license applications and considerations for potential licensees.
- Noted that hybrid cannabis retailers are cultivating and selling their own products which hurts cultivators.
- Proposed that the Commission should put out applications for the new retail licenses while working on getting the social equity program underway.
- Requested a potential license type or accommodations be made to assist with the restrictions that hinder those who work in cannabis photography and videography to conduct their trade in a more efficient manner.

Adjournment:

Upon motion made by Commissioner Oduyingbo and duly seconded by Commissioner Jacquard, it was unanimously

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 1:20 pm.

Next Meeting Date: To be determined.