



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

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

## **Cannabis Control Commission**

### **Open Meeting Minutes**

**DATE:** Friday September 6, 2024  
**TIME:** 1:00 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

Chairperson Ahern called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm.

The first item of business was:

#### **Introductory remarks from Chairperson Ahern, which included:**

- Moving from introductory remarks to the next agenda item.

The next item of business was:

**Motion to approve the minutes of the Open Session Meeting held on August 27, 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 August 27, 2024.

The next item of business was:

**Ethics presentation by Lynne Radiches, Staff Attorney and Education Coordinator, Rhode Island Ethics Commission, which included:**

- Attorney Radiches provided a training on the Rhode Island Code of Ethics, R.I. Gen. Laws Chapter 36-14, to the Commission.

The next item of business was:

**Presentation on the proposed licensing process for new adult use cannabis retailers as set forth in the Rhode Island Cannabis Act, which included:**

- Reviewed licensing schemes from nearby states with adult-use cannabis.
- Chairperson Ahern noted that Rhode Island is different from some of our larger neighboring states who either had more licenses to obtain or operate under an unlimited licensing scheme.
- Reported on lessons learned from other states' licensing process.
- Noted challenges with states that chose a purely merit-based selection process.
- Provided examples of the demand of licenses for both retail and social equity licenses from other states.
- Reviewed previous licensing selection process in Rhode Island, with respect to the 2021 Office of Cannabis Regulation random selection process for the selection of Compassion Center licenses.
- Proposed hybrid randomized selection process for licenses in Rhode Island.
- Hybrid randomized selection process would include an initial merit-based application to ensure applicant meets qualification and readiness for licensure.
- Screened, qualified applicants would then be placed into a pool for random selection process.
- Random selection process would be conducted only in zones where demand for retail licenses outweighs the supply of available licenses.

Discussion ensued amongst the Commissioners, which included:

- Questioned if there's been collusion between applicants or anti-trust issues in other states.

- Discussed the potential legislative intent of the General Assembly in not specifying a selection process in the Cannabis Act.
- Noted that the statute could be amended in legislative session to specify a selection process.
- Discussed the licensing fee and financial wherewithal of applicants for consideration.
- Expressed the competitive differences between a merit-based system and lottery system.
- Discussed the possibility of a lottery system if necessary, and potential issues that could arise.
- Noted that litigation is a potential but could be contained to either a particular license type or particular zone.
- Discussed the provisional nature of the licensing scheme presented.
- Noted that the staff will take Commissioners' feedback to review the proposed licensing selection process.
- Reviewed conditional approval by the Commission to allow for the staff to continue work on the regulations.
- Highlighted that the conditional approval is not final until the rules and regulations are presented in their entirety to the Commission by Chief Legal counsel.

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

VOTED: To allow Commission staff to proceed in a manner consistent with the materials presented, with the caveat that the Commission shall, at a later time, consider this process for final approval and promulgation of official rules and regulations.

The next item of business was:

**Public Comment:**

Four people provided public comment, which included:

- Requested more retail stores be opened as soon as possible.
- Suggested that merit-based qualifications should include zoning, proof of funds, city/town approval, and then could be moved into a lottery of qualified applicants.
- Need regulations to be passed as soon as possible.
- Expressed that inflation has hurt the cannabis industry and cultivators.
- Requested changes that could help cultivators with profit margins, to include

- larger batch sizes for testing.
- Requested that no additional processing licenses be introduced.
  - Appreciation for the Commission's work.
  - Suggested looking to the legislature for special court that may help expedite any potential litigation issues that could come from licensing.
  - Suggested that applicants be able to show building plans and
  - Expressed support for hybrid licensing model.
  - Noted that the 2021 Compassion Center lottery model was very transparent.

**Adjournment:**

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

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 2:59 pm.

**Next Meeting Date:** September 13, 2024.