

Public hearings to be held on location of medical marijuana dispensaries in St. Lucie County

BY: Keona Gardner

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ST. LUCIE COUNTY — Members of the County Commission want to make it clear that their decision to advertise an ordinance regulating the location of medical marijuana dispensaries does not mean they support or are against legalizing the drug; they simply want to protect the public, officials said.

The group in a 5-0 vote Tuesday approved allowing county staff to advertise three public hearings about the medical marijuana dispensaries ordinance should state voters approve marijuana for medical purposes. The exact times and dates for the county public hearings had not been selected.

“We’re not in a position to advocate for or against this,” County Attorney Dan McIntyre said. “We are wanting to get out in front of this to avoid any conflicts.”

The county ordinance is in place as a precaution to state Amendment 2, which would allow medical use of marijuana for people with debilitating diseases, as determined by a licensed Florida doctor. The amendment must be passed by a 60 percent majority.

The proposed county ordinance would allow dispensaries in an industrial light zoning district. The county also is considering allowing dispensaries in a commercial general zoning district, County Planning and Development Services Director Mark Satterlee wrote Monday in an email to Scripps Treasure Coast Newspapers.

According to the proposed ordinance, the dispensary must be at least 2,500 feet away from any day care, school, residence, park, playground, religious institution, pharmacy, park or other medical marijuana dispensary.

The business hours of operation would be 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday; 8 a.m. to noon Saturday and closed Sunday.

Satterlee stressed the proposed ordinance is in its preliminary stage and is expected to change before it gets to Planning and Zoning Commission sometime in November.

Two people spoke against advertising the ordinance and asked the commission to wait until after voters approve or reject Amendment 2.

However, County Commissioner Tod Mowery said the board's actions show the county is being proactive.

"As commissioners you need to be sitting in a position where you are protecting your residents," he said.

Added Commission Chairwoman Frannie Hutchinson, "I see it mostly as preparing for what could happen in the future."

HIGHLIGHTS

Highlights of St. Lucie County proposed medical marijuana dispensary ordinance:

- Allows dispensaries in an industrial light zoning district
- Dispensaries cannot serve alcoholic beverages
- Business must be more than 2,500 feet away from any residence, pharmacy, school, medical office, day care center, adult living facility, park, playground, religious institution or other medical marijuana dispensary
- Hours of operation: 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday; 8 a.m. to noon Saturday, closed Sunday

- Cannot have outside display of any products
- Must post “No Loitering” signs on all sides of the building
- Vehicles cannot line the right of way to wait for access to the building

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