Harlowton City Ordinance Committee Minutes

January 26, 2021

Harlowton City Library Conference Room

6:00PM

**Minutes:** Minutes from the January 12,2021 Ordinance Committee meeting were approved as written.

**Public Comment:** There was no public comment.

**Business:** A discussion took place regarding the Montana Law for Recreational Marijuana use as well as the opening of Dispensaries within the City of Harlowton. Ordinance Committee member Jack Runner presented the committee with documents regarding the Montana Recreation Marijuana Law as well as zoning documents. The Committee reviewed the documents and continued the discussion from the last Ordinance Meeting (1/12/2021). It was agreed by all members that many of the concerns brought up at the last meeting regarding when and where Marijuana could be used within the City limits would be covered by the Montana Law. This includes the prohibited use of Marijuana at parks, schools, City property and at public events.

The conversation carried over to the topic of Marijuana Dispensaries opening in the City of Harlowton. Jack told the group that he had done some research and found out from the County that a City/County Planning Board would need to decide this. Jack stated that this Board meets quarterly and Mayor Paul Otten stated that we should find out when the next meeting would be. Jack asked if someone should reach out to Page Dringman as well as County Clerk-Recorder Mary Miller about this planning board. Mary suggested that a member of the Council be selected to represent the City at these meetings.

Ordinance Committee member Frank Brouillette stated that one of the main issues is that the City does not have a zoning law regarding business in residential areas. Discussion ensued regarding where the best place in town for a Dispensary to open would be. It was suggested that the less populated and more rural or industrial areas would be best.

Jack suggested that the City reach out to other Cities and Towns to find out how they have handled similar situations.

At this point the Committee opened the meeting up to the public for comment. Businessman Kirby Hubbs asked if it was necessary for someone opening up a liquor store in town to have a City License or pre-approval from the City. The Committee was not sure because the last time a liquor store opened in Harlowton was so long ago.

Community member Cort VanCampen gave his experiences on how the legal Marijuana industry operated in other states that he had been to. This included California, Washington, Nevada and Colorado He said it was a very strict process to purchase products in a dispensary and that the businesses were very discrete.

Community member Jennifer Perkins expressed her concern regarding Marijuana becoming more easily available to minors, should a dispensary open in town. Community member Jeremy Perkins asked what the process would be for a decision like this to be made. Jack made it clear that this was a drawn out process of gathering information and researching. Frank explained that after the Committee creates a proposed Ordinance, it would go to the Council for a vote.

Ordinance Committee member Allison Jones asked how long it would take for someone to get their license to open a Recreational Marijuana Dispensary in Montana. Kirby Hubbs stated that in October 2021 one could submit for a license but that they license process would not “go live” until February 2022.

A discussion took place regarding parent’s concerns with Marijuana use in the schools. Community member Rob Elwood suggested that the fines and penalties for Marijuana being found in a student’s possession should be strong to deter them. Rob suggested making it a misdemeanor and also having a large fine attached to the charge. He suggested getting the Law Enforcement involved in this.

Discussion also took place regarding how the revenue from the dispensaries would be distributed throughout the state and cities.

Paul brought up the issue of a second obscene flag going up on a private property within Harlowton City limits. Paul stated that he had received more complaints regarding the flag but again explained to the concerned citizens that there was no ordinance against it and that even if there was, it would more than likely violate the person’s “Freedom of Speech”.

Items on the next Meeting’s agenda include:  
-A continued discussion of the Montana Recreational Marijuana laws and Dispensaries.

-Review of Chapter 15 of the Ordinance Book

Meeting adjourned at 6:50 pm.

Committee Members present: Frank Brouillette, Jack Runner, Allison Jones

Committee Members absent: none

City: Paul Otten, Lara Brisco, Bob Schuchard, Karen Hammel, City Attorney

Sheriff’s Office: none

Public Present: Linda Hickman, Jennifer Perkins, Jeremy Perkins, Cort VanCampen, Rob Elwood, Kirby Hubbs, (Ron and Merilee Swickard)

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Paul Otten, Mayor Lara Brisco, City Clerk-Treasurer