

Wheatland Township Special Meeting

7:00 PM, January 10, 2022

Roll call:

Tom VanSyckle, present

Amy Snyder, present

Mary Karcher, absent

Ethan McNeal, present

Lee Carte, present

Meeting called to order at 7:00 pm by Supervisor Tom VanSyckle. Tom made a few opening comments about the agenda being open for public comments regarding the marijuana ordinance in Wheatland Township. Tom also welcomed Attorney Eric Williams and the Township Insurance Representative, Ken Lind.

Public Comment:

Pastor Chuck Richardson, he indicated that he is opposed to all aspects of allowing any marijuana operation coming into our community.

Trey Porter, indicated that he owns/operates a distribution facility in Clare and sees the benefits of it as it helps pain relief for medical issues including PTSD. He also indicated that it will boost our economy.

Ruth Chapman, resident of Wheatland Township, spoke about not being in agreement with allowing any marijuana operation within our community. Also indicated potential issues we could have with zoning. Someone questioned if the issue with zoning was in fact true and attorney Eric Williams spoke up and did agree that it is somewhat true as we cannot limit zoning to only certain parcels. He indicated that we could limit the number of licenses we issue.

Iona Brown, resident of Wheatland Township, says she's lived here about 20 years and agrees that the pain control for medical issues is a good thing and alcohol is probably worse to allow in our community.

Mario Porter, owns/operates a facility in Clare and has interest in coming into Remus. Mario spoke about crime increase and that he doesn't see any increase in Clare. Also, he doesn't agree that marijuana is a gateway drug. He thinks overall that crime will decrease and property values will increase. Chuck Richardson and Ruth Chapman both spoke up and do not believe that allowing it for financial gain is the right thing to do.

Supervisor Tom VanSyckle addressed Eric Williams asking if we can allow it for medical use without allowing it for recreational use? The answer to that question is yes, the Township is not required to authorize both. The opinion of Mario Porter is that medical use only will not survive here without recreational.

Supervisor Tom VanSyckle addressed Eric Williams asking who regulates it, does the state? The answer is yes. The local government gives the administrative local permit after the business has gone through the state licensing system. We also do not need local police. Eric Williams indicated that the City of Big Rapids has not had any increase in criminal activity.

Ruth Chapman asked if a grow facility opened does it have to be rezoned? Eric Williams says the large indoor grow facilities need to be in industrial zoned. Trey Porter added that they can be zoned either industrial or agricultural. Eric Williams said he would check into the zoning question for a grow facility.

Another community meeting was suggested to gain more public input and take the extra time to listen to our residents. Eric Williams can provide sample ordinances when we get to the end of public meetings should the township be interested in that.

Supervisor Tom VanSyckle to Eric Williams, how does the state do the tax? Eric indicated there is a formula the state uses. Biggest revenue for the Township is the application fee, he suggested we set the fee to start at \$5,000 and that is collected every year.

Linda Wernette, resident of Wheatland Township, asked if the financial gain was mostly permit fees and increased foot traffic? Eric Williams said smaller communities such as Remus are not experiencing more foot traffic. Distribution stores should not be located in a small downtown area, they need good parking and easy in and out accessibility, that tends to be the pattern in other communities. He said the cost of developing the ordinance could be up to \$10,000 and application fees will be used in startup costs.

Pastor Chuck Richardson spoke that he does not want to see Remus as a community that promotes marijuana.

Ken Lind, Insurance Representative, gave an informative speech to wrap up our meeting. He said all issues almost always come back to be related to insurance. His company will cover marijuana issues that arise, many companies do not because it's federally illegal. He said they will represent us in any lawsuits and chances are there will be one eventually. Crime can go either way he said, some areas increase and some see no change. He cautioned against only issuing one license, said to do at least two or we are just opening ourselves up to a lawsuit. He used the Pinconning community as an example, they profited about \$50,000 last year but the money needs to be spent against the control of the businesses they have allowed. He explained that a decision to allow it cannot be reversed and he expects our startup costs to be at least \$20,000, we will hopefully make enough money to cover our expenses.

No other comments.

Motion to adjourn by Lee Carte, support by Ethan McNeal. Meeting adjourned at 8:40pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Amy Snyder
Treasurer