

**HOPEWELL TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE SPECIAL CANNABIS FORUM MEETING  
VIA ZOOM VIDEO COMMUNICATIONS**

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**Tuesday, January 25, 2022 – 7:04 p.m.**

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**PROPER STATEMENT OF NOTICE** – Mayor Peters-Manning called the meeting to order stating that notice of the meeting had been posted on the municipal bulletin board and forwarded to the Hopewell Valley News, The Times, the Trentonian and the Hopewell Express (the official newspapers) on January 14, 2022, in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, P.L. 1975.

**ROLL CALL:** Those answering the roll call of the Municipal Clerk:

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:** Kevin Kuchinski, Uma Purandare, Michael Ruger,  
Mayor Courtney Peters-Manning

**ABSENT:** David Chait

**STAFF PRESENT:** Administrator/Public Works Director George Snyder, Municipal Clerk Laurie Gompf, CFO Julie Troutman, Police Director Robert Karmazin, Township Attorney Steve Goodell, Attorney Scott Miccio

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**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG** – Mayor Peters-Manning led those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

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**PUBLIC FORUM – RETAIL CANNABIS OPERATIONS IN HOPEWELL TOWNSHIP**

Mayor Peters-Manning introduced Scott Miccio, Attorney from Parker McCay, who would be providing an explanation and overview of cannabis law; announced that Dr. Rosetta Treece of the Hopewell Valley Regional School District will be providing the district’s perspective; that Police Director Robert Karmazin will address issues he believes should be considered; and that Hugh O’Beirne, a member of the cannabis industry, will offer his perspective and other issues the Township should consider.

Committee Member Ruger explained that this meeting is a “listening session;” that no decision on allowing cannabis licensing will be decided at this evening’s meeting; that if a decision is made to move forward in the future, an ordinance would need to be considered and adopted; that previous decisions made will not be considered at this meeting; and that this meeting is focused on cannabis retail in the Township.

Mr. Miccio provided an overview of State law; that the Township must affirmatively opt in to any of the six cannabis license classes in order to permit cannabis businesses within the Township; that those licenses classes are, cultivation, manufacturing, wholesale, distribution, retail and delivery service. He explained that the Township adopted an ordinance in November allowing the manufacturing and cultivation of cannabis within the Township; and that before that ordinance was introduced, the Township had opted out of the other licensing classes; that the Township is now seeking public input with regard to permitting Class V retail in the Township; that the term retail use of cannabis is, in laymen’s terms, a cannabis store; that a cannabis store must be licensed by both the State and the Township; that the retail store buys cannabis from wholesalers or manufacturers and then sells directly to consumers; and that retailers may also utilize a delivery service to take orders and deliver product to customers.

He further explained that in order for a cannabis retail store to locate itself within the Township, it must have the approval of the State and the Township; that the State application process for cannabis retailers will open on March 15, 2022; that the number of retail licenses that the State issues will depend on supply and demand. He reviewed the requirements to obtain a State license for cannabis retail sales; explained that the State has given municipalities a lot of leeway as to how

and where they will allow cannabis businesses; reviewed the requirements of cannabis licensing which are controlled by the State; reviewed the areas in which a municipality has control over cannabis licensing; displayed a map which reflected the current permitted retail use zones within Hopewell Township; explained that the Township could also require that cannabis retail shops be within a certain distance from places of worship, schools, playgrounds, parks and daycare facilities; specified other requirements the Township could consider; announced that the Township could tax the businesses up to 2% on retail sales; and that the Township could also choose to restrict consumption areas.

Committee Members questioned if there were any restrictions on the amount of cannabis that could be stored onsite to which Mr. Miccio advised that he would need to research the information; if retailers are limited to sell only products grown in New Jersey to which Mr. Miccio answered yes, they are as cannabis is not allowed to be transported over State lines; and if facilities would be cash-only business or allow credit card processing to which Mr. Miccio advised that he did not know.

Police Director Karmazin advised that he did not see any major issues with the manufacturing aspect as far as security was concerned and that the existing security regulations are sound; that the flow of traffic could be a concern; that with regard to the retail aspect he was not concerned with the security requirements set by the State; that he was concerned with the traffic, the flow of input, and the flow of people coming in; that there was not a limit on the amount of cannabis that a person is allowed to consume as yet, like there is with alcohol; that his major concern is consumption and users driving under the influence; and that issues would be similar to that of having a liquor store or bar.

Committee Members questioned how consumption excess would be enforced to which Director Karmazin replied that the limits have yet to be determined; if the possibility of traffic would be high due to the proximity of the Township to the Pennsylvania border to which Director Karmazin agreed it would be likely; and questioned what the Township should do to protect the residents.

Dr. Rosetta Treece, Superintendent of Schools, Hopewell Valley Regional School District, made the following statement: "As Superintendent of Schools, my charge, our charge, of the School District is to protect the well-being and safety of our most vulnerable and fragile residents in our community, our children and young adults. So toward that end, we request that the Committee consider the following, and we would like to have an extended conversation and collaboration moving forward on these items regarding the bringing of dispensaries and cultivation sites into our community. The Hopewell Valley Regional School District urges the enforcement of requiring at least a 1,000-foot buffer between any of the cannabis dispensaries and cultivation sites situated near our schools or our athletic fields. This is in alignment with the Federal laws for Drug Free School Zones. The District also requests that a portion of the tax revenues generated from legal cannabis dispensaries and sales be directed to defray the costs associated with cannabis legalization including a comprehensive public and school-based education about cannabis use and its effects on the health of our students, our children, and well-being of adolescents, and particularly the effects of this drug on the adolescent brain.

We also would like a policy review, training, and legal implications regulating the treatment of students and staff suspected of possessing and using cannabis on our school properties. The District requests a commitment from the municipality and the licensed legal dispensaries and cultivation sites in town, to strictly enforce the law prohibiting sales to minors. If there is an opportunity to learn what measures will be in place to monitor potential sales to minors, the Board welcomes that dialogue as well.

And finally, as a means to ensure that all of these goals are met, the Hopewell Valley Regional School District urges the consideration, if we are moving forward with this, for the convening of a cannabis task force, like is happening in other neighboring school districts, to address issues regarding legal cannabis. This task force would serve in an advisory capacity to provide input to the Mayor and the Township Committee on major areas concerning concerns regarding legal cannabis to include cannabis operations in our Township, enforcement and student community education. Again, we thank you for inviting us into this conversation tonight in this forum and we look forward to a continued dialogue moving forward in an effort to protect our young people as you make this decision."

Mayor Peters-Manning requested that Dr. Treece clarify her definition of a task force. Committee Members provided their ideas regarding such a task force and agreed with Dr. Treece's statements.

Hugh O’Beirne, a member of the cannabis industry, remarked that members of the cannabis industry believe that regulated access to cannabis is part of the solution to keeping cannabis out of the hands of children and to also be part of the educational commitment to the residents of New Jersey: to begin to understand something that, due to prohibition, has not been eradicated, but pushed underneath the radar and the ability to control. He remarked that regulated cannabis is a means to utilize regulated market forces that come equipped with transparency and accountability to move consumers away from the illicit market and into the regulated market with all of its commitments to actually policing itself and committing to obey the regulations of the State and the municipalities in which it is operating; that there are a number of things that the future of retail dispensing of cannabis could look like in Hopewell Township; that delivery of cannabis into Hopewell Township by external cannabis delivery services and dispensaries will happen regardless of what the Committee decides; that any revenues from delivery sales will go to their host communities; and that educational and policing preparation would be extremely wise regardless of whether or not Hopewell Township decides to host retail facilities in the community.

Mr. O’Beirne explained that when the facilities are properly situated under the State laws of New Jersey, they are very secure; that they are cash and carry facilities; that there is the potential for social consumption in the future which currently isn’t allowed by law; that consumption will take place in Hopewell Township; that people who have consumed cannabis will be moving throughout Hopewell Township; that it is absolutely critical to consider how to address the public safety; that dispensary hosting municipalities may tax up to 2% on sales; that tax revenues could potentially earn between \$3 and \$5 million dollars a year; and that the cannabis retail facilities are extremely well secured, more so than pharmacies or banks.

He went on to explain the requirements when purchasing cannabis which included the prohibition of consuming or opening the cannabis product on the premises in which it was bought; ID checks; that goods are prepackaged in sealed bags and then repackaged in an additional bag; that one must entirely leave the premises before opening the package they have purchased; that there are fencing and vaulting requirements for cannabis kept on the premises; that there are security cameras and feeds of multiple locations; that there are on-staff security guards; and that failure to secure cannabis from minors is a major concern of the State. Mr. O’Beirne emphasized that the Township’s regulation of signage will have a great impact in avoiding underage cannabis usage; that allowing cannabis in a municipality should not be mandatory; and that the culture within the municipality determines if it should allow cannabis. He then addressed the fanfare surrounding the sale of cannabis; where cannabis retail sites should be placed; and parking and traffic concerns.

Committee Members requested that Mr. O’Beirne provide his credentials and questioned what the term “cash and carry” meant.

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## **PUBLIC SECTION**

The following members of the public spoke during public comment:

**Ruth Deltino**, a resident of Mercer County, questioned if there will be education for workers/servers in the cannabis industry to provide addiction assistance to the public; if dispensaries will be used to provide assistance to the public for addiction services and mental health; and if Mercer County would be willing to provide harm reduction and mental health services as well.

**Heidi Kahme**, a resident of Tanglewood Drive, extended her support of the recommendations made by Dr. Treece, urged education in regard to young people in relation to cannabis; stated her concern over high-potency cannabis consumption by young people; cited statistics regarding youth use of cannabis; urged the Committee to do all they can to prevent young people from using high-potency cannabis.

**Diana Zita**, a resident of Hopewell Township, commented that this is a situation that will happen regardless; that it is an opportunity for raising money; that this is an opportunity that shouldn’t be overlooked; that there is an advantage to controlling how it is done and being responsible; expressed that she supports it; and requested that the Committee vote in favor of it.

**John Hart**, a resident of Titus Mill Road, mentioned that Hopewell Township will be surrounded by retail cannabis stores due to other communities allowing cannabis retailers; that he has two children living in different states which already allow legalized cannabis; that those states are very strict with ID; that there are so many stores there is no impact on the community, crime or traffic wise; that he believes that because the other communities surrounding Hopewell will have many stores, the impact will not be great on the Township and that revenue will not be as high as expected; and that he agreed that the Township should try to glean some revenue from this.

**Kristie Luff**, a resident of Pennington Harbourton Road, stated that she would like to see more consideration on how the Township will handle the safety surrounding the retail stores; questioned what studies and thought were given as to how this will impact the property values in the Township.

**William Fouts**, a resident of Pennington Harbourton Road, commented that he would like to see that there are funds to address people's concerns by taxing 2% on cannabis cultivation, manufacturing and retail sales and that he is in favor of cannabis.

**Louise Aucott**, a resident of Tree Farm Road, stated that she is in favor; that governance takes precedence; that there are no studies stating that cannabis is more dangerous than alcohol; that lives have been negatively affected by alcohol; and expressed her desire that the 2% tax would generate enough revenue to bring in assistance that the community needs to address addiction issues.

**Debbie Linthorst**, a resident of Hallett Drive, requested clarification on the potential revenue of cultivation, delivery and sale of cannabis.

A discussion ensued regarding the potential revenue regarding the various possibilities of revenue, however, it was difficult to pinpoint an exact figure.

The detailed public comment may be viewed at [www.hopewelltp.org](http://www.hopewelltp.org) in the video library.

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At 8:27 p.m., motion by Kuchinski, seconded by Ruger to adjourn the meeting.

**MOTION UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED**

The detailed public meeting may be viewed at [www.hopewelltp.org](http://www.hopewelltp.org) in the video library.

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LAURIE E. GOMPF  
MUNICIPAL CLERK