

**OVID TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION**

**OVID TOWNSHIP OFFICE, BRANCH COUNTY, MICHIGAN**

**December 15, 2020**

**PUBLIC HEARING (VIRTUAL MEETING)**

The Ovid Township Planning Commission Public Hearing was held virtually via Zoom and was called to order by Andy AcMoody at 6:02p.m.

Members present: Andy AcMoody, Chris Donbrock, Sean Groves, Jim Snivley, Tammi Schorfhaar

Other present: Gregg Gemmill, Robert Hawley, Chris Khorey, Joe Haas, Terry Swick, Melissa Sussex, Michael Mihuc, Greg Taylor, Karen Gallagher, Rob Covert, Kelli and Randy Cook, Lisa Miller, Bill Benjamin, Greg Brown, Ruby Harst

The item that was brought forth was the necessary amendments to the zoning ordinance for the retail sale of Marijuana following the approval of the ballot measure during the November 3, 2020 election which authorized the establishment of up to two marijuana retail establishments in the Township.

Public comment:

Terry Swick asked what additional taxes and/or fees would be going to Ovid Township. Terry lives on Pearl Beach Road and expressed concern about increased traffic and maintenance of their road as it is private.

Melissa Sussex lives on Pearl Beach Road and shared the traffic concerns especially since marijuana is not legal in Indiana. Melissa also expressed concerns about the dangers to young children and adults.

Michael Hihuc is the Director of Operations for Hillsdale Compliance Specialists. Michael represents investors who are interested in developing the former Dee's gas station (at the corner of Pearl Beach and US27) for a retail marijuana store. Michael had pictures of what the location could look like and he estimated that they would expect 65 – 70 cars per day. Michael also shared that statistics show that crime goes down in areas near a retail marijuana store.

Greg Taylor lives on Pearl Beach and he concurred with the concerns of his neighbors.

Karen Gallagher lives on Pearl Beach and she agreed with the others in the neighborhood and reiterated her concern about maintenance of the road.

Rob Covert said that would support the retail marijuana stores being located in the Enterprise District and feels that marijuana is a gateway drug to other drugs.

Kelli and Randy Cook own the former Dee's gas station. They said that the proposed location is 2-3 miles from Pearl Beach and they said that the instances of impaired driving would actually go down. They feel that there is a lot of misinformation out there about these types of retail stores and they encouraged people to go visit one in person. They also expressed concern that there is nowhere in the Enterprise District that is currently available for purchase in order to establish a retail marijuana store.

Lisa Miller has a home in Shady Oaks and she asked if operating hours for a retail marijuana store have been established. She also inquired into security for such establishments.

Bill Benjamin lives on Pearl Beach and he clarified that the former Dee's gas station is only 1 mile from Pearl Beach. He also expressed that he is not in favor of a retail marihuana store at this location.

Greg Gemmill read a prepared statement as a private citizen of Ovid Township. Greg stressed that the investors who are interested in developing these retail marihuana stores have distributed a lot of misinformation. Greg said that he has been contacted by a number of voters who feel that they were misled by the information they received in the mail prior to the election.

Greg Brown represents investors of various commercial real estate ventures and their group has an option to purchase the former Sportsman's location. Their goal would be to revitalize this area with a retail marihuana store and an ice cream store. Greg said that they want to make this a win/win for everyone.

Randy Cook spoke again and said that the State of Michigan requires security cameras in every room of a retail marihuana store. He said that they have never tried to deceive anyone in the information they have shared.

Karen Gallagher spoke a second time and said that she absolutely disagrees with Michael Hihuc's statement that crime would go down. Karen said that she works in this field every day and that crime will not go down.

Ruby Harst lives on Pearl Beach and she asked the Planning Commission to please consider the investment of the homeowners who live in this area.

The Public Hearing was closed at 6:56p.m. by Andy AcMoody at which time the topic was opened to the Planning Commission for consideration and conversation.

Jim Snivley has an extensive background in law enforcement and he stressed that crime never goes down where drugs are involved. Jim also agreed that marihuana is a gateway drug and he suggested that retail marihuana stores only be allowed in the Enterprise Zone.

Tammi Schorfhaar asked Joe Haas, the Township attorney, if property must currently be available for purchase in whatever Zone we allow these establishments in. Joe said that availability is not a requirement and Chris Khorey of McKenna added that any property can submit a request to be rezoned at any time.

Sean Groves said that he feels that the only support for allowing retail marihuana stores in the areas zoned Commercial have come from the investors and owners who will profit from such an establishment. The comments presented by others who live near those areas were all opposed.

Jim Snivley made a motion to strike Section 2 from the ordinance. This would remove the possibility of retail marihuana stores being allowed in the Commercial Zone; seconded by Chris Donbrock; motion carried.

Chris Donbrock made a motion to recommend the amended draft of the ordinance to the County Planning Commission; seconded by Sean Groves; motion carried.

Chris Donbrock made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Jim Snivley; motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:16p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Tammi Schorfhaar, secretary.