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City: Residents speak out against pot business

By: Chris Hendrickson January 15, 2014 Monroe News News 1911 Views

By Chris Hendrickson, Monitor

PUBLIC HEARING – MARIJUANA

A public hearing was held Tuesday night at the regular meeting of the Monroe City Council for council to listen to testimony on the adoption of the ordinance which established a six-month moratorium on the issuance of business licenses for any marijuana-related use. The ordinance also prohibits medical cannabis collective gardens in all zoning districts.

Monroe city staff made a recommendation to council and provided an additional ordinance which would establish zoning in relation for marijuana-related land uses including production, processing and retail sales.

It had been previously suggested by Monroe legal counsel that establishing zoning for marijuana related uses would be a wise precautionary measure should in fact the city experience any legal ramifications over the business license moratorium.

Public testimony included over a dozen residents of incorporated Monroe, as well as some of the outlying areas, voicing their opposition over allowing any type of marijuana-related businesses to operate within Monroe.

Dave Ketchell is a Drug and Alcohol Intervention Specialist at the Monroe School District, and a member of the Monroe Community Coalition. The coalition is a community-led effort to fight drug and alcohol abuse in the city of Monroe.

Ketchell asked for a six-month extension of the moratorium in the interest of allowing for additional study and time to analyze how the new law is affecting both the Monroe community and others.

"It is said that a smart person learns from his mistakes. It's also said that the wise person learns from the mistakes of others," said Ketchell. "There is no need to hurry action."

"We believe an extended moratorium is prudent," he continued.

Monroe resident Steve Whalen offered council a piece of his own testimony, which included his own personal experiences with marijuana and other substances. Whalen said he began smoking marijuana at age 16 with a small group of friends. He stated that none of them believed that their marijuana use would lead to other drugs.

"We used to vehemently declare that we would never progress onto harder drugs," said Whalen. "We thought it was ridiculous."

He said that by the age of 18, he knew that he was addicted, and by 19, he had experimented with other drugs, as well, as had his group of friends.

"Every one of us had progressed on to cocaine, LSD, various forms of amphetamines; and to be honest I took some drugs that, to this day, I have no idea what they were," said Whalen.

Whalen expressed gratitude at his drug-free life today, but declared that not all of his friends have been so lucky. Some experienced health issues and one of his friends died as a direct result of drug abuse.

"Unless a person has experienced addiction, they really, truly cannot comprehend it," said Whalen.

He asked for the moratorium to be extended for the betterment of the city and to protect the youth in the community.

WEATHER

Monroe, WA

Today	Thursday
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"When it comes to youth, if it's available at all, they will get ahold of it," said Whalen.

This sentiment was echoed throughout the majority of the public testimony. A student from Monroe High School spoke out against it, as well as many parents and grandparents.

Two citizens offered support, including 7-year Monroe resident Dolly Leisten.

Leisten stated that she feels that the marijuana-related business establishments, specifically retail stores which sell marijuana, will be carefully regulated in the same manner as alcohol sales. She clarified that consumers will need to be 21 to purchase it, and stores that disregard this law will be forced to shut down.

Leisten said that in her opinion, Monroe seems perfectly willing to allow other tax-generating establishments into the city; such as the Wakeboard Park at Lake Tye and Walmart.

"Monroe is money-hungry," said Leisten. "Let's do it."

"I'm saying let's do it because then you'll be able to monitor it," she continued.

Leisten shared that she feels that the police department and the school district could potentially benefit from the additional tax revenue coming into the city from marijuana sales.

"I say, let it in, give it a chance," said Leisten.

Public testimony continued for approximately 90 minutes. Council was repeatedly urged to maintain a moratorium on business licensing or to seek a permanent ban.

In an effort give the matter appropriate consideration, council made the decision to extend the public testimony portion of the public hearing; citizens who wish to weigh in on this issue should attend the February 4 council meeting to give additional comments.

Establishing the specific zoning areas would act as an added control for the city; adopting the zoning does not mean that the moratorium is not still in place. It just provides for zoning regulations to exist officially as a backup.

Councilperson Patsy Cudaback clarified this for the record.

"They're just there in case the moratorium is overturned in court," said Cudaback.

To see a map of the proposed zoning regulations, please see: <http://wa-monroe.civicplus.com/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Item/1327?fileID=2282>.

MONROE COMMUNITY VISIONING WORKSHOP

Monroe Planning and Permitting Manager Paul Popelka informed council of a Monroe Community Visioning workshop which will take place on Thursday, Jan. 23 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at Park Place Middle School.

The workshop is open to the public, and will be a way for the community to come together and analyze what the vision is for Monroe and what that vision looks like against the current conditions. Folks can also give their thoughts on what the city should be focusing on, moving forward.

The meeting offers a way for the community to be involved in the Comprehensive Plan update process that will be taking place over the next 18 months. Plans include creating a roadmap for what the next 20 years should look like.

Public input is welcomed at the event. Attendees will be given the opportunity to provide input into what they feel about the current vision and to provide a picture of what they would like to see. The workshop will be interactive and community participation is strongly encouraged.

Park Place Middle School is located at 1408 W. Main St. in Monroe.

SCHOOL DISTRICT TO SEEK GRANT FOR BALL FIELD IMPROVEMENTS

Council unanimously agreed to pass a motion to assist the Monroe School District in their efforts to obtain grant funding to complete a 3-phased project consisting of improvements to three ball fields located at Monroe High School.

The motion authorized Mayor Thomas to submit a letter of support for the school district to submit with their application to the Snohomish County Tourism Promotion Area Grant board. In addition to the letter, the city agreed to commit to a \$100,000 contribution towards the funding of the ball field improvements.

"The phased completion of this project will result in a multi-use facility that can be used jointly by the school district and Monroe Parks and Recreation," wrote Monroe School District Assistant Superintendent John Mannix.

Council decides on parallel, angle parking combo

📅 April 6, 2015 👁 393 Views

Police Blotter | April 7, 2015

📅 April 6, 2015 👁 200 Views

Letter | Bond covers needed renovations

📅 April 6, 2015 👁 186 Views

UPCOMING EVENTS

April 9, 2015 10:00 am

Tabitha House - Clothing Drive

April 14, 2015 7:00 pm

Monroe City Council

April 16, 2015 6:30 pm

Evergreen Republican Women's Club

April 17, 2015 7:00 pm

**The Slaughterhouse Lounge presents
psychic/medium Ankhasha Amenti**

MAGAZINES



The school district is working to obtain additional funding for these improvements and has recently acquired over \$200,000 through a timber sale.

The city's \$100,000 would help with the first phase of the ball field improvements.

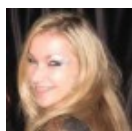
For additional information as well as a diagram of the proposed ball fields, please visit: <http://wamonroe.civicplus.com/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Item/1331?fileID=2284>.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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2 COMMENTS



cyrixlord

January 20, 2014 at 3:36 pm

So the City of Monroe wants to pay for all the enforcement and get none of the profit and taxes from the state? Because the state won't give any MJ based money to any place that is banning it, and the city will start drying up while it tries to enforce the ban and the illicit black market that will surely explode in Monroe, while everywhere around it will be flush with legal MJ businesses, taxes and funds. Sounds like Monroe needs to reconsider their course of action before the moratorium expires or there this city will be the place to be to get black market green gold! and have to pay to enforce it with no help from the state.

Reply ↩



Dan Hacker

January 21, 2014 at 1:12 pm

You can see just how screwed-up this process is by looking at the zoning document. Part H is

particularly full of propaganda. I'm sure those opposed to the measure will continue to bring out these falsehoods. Also, I don't understand what effect people expect to have on "the youth" simply by keeping it out of our town. They can get it easier than I can. It will have NO EFFECT!

I'm sorry, but the sad stories about how marijuana led people down the wrong path could have easily been stories about alcohol...where is the outrage at having multiple liquor stores in Monroe! There is none. Because it is pure hypocrisy. Or maybe these are simply misguided.

Remember...the majority of Monroe voters voted YES!!!

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