

Catskill Town Board Committee Meeting
Robert C. Antonelli Senior Center
November 17, 2021 6:30 pm

PRESENT: Dale Finch, Supervisor
Patrick McCulloch, Councilman
Dawn Scannapieco, Councilwoman
Paul Vosburgh, Councilman

Supervisor Finch opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance. Before opening the meeting to public comment regarding marijuana use in the Town of Catskill, he reviewed the procedure for enacting a local law to opt out of any of the four options. He also reviewed the percentage breakdown of revenue received between state, county, town and village and if the town opts out, no revenue would be received by the town from village sales if the village opts in.

Dan Arshack stated the reason the town should participate is people are using town services, driving on town roads and if the town is impacted by that person purchasing, the town should participate in receiving tax revenue but believes the rules are not yet written in stone. Supervisor Finch stated since the rules have not been finalized it is difficult to decide. Mr. Arshack asked what the options are and asked if the town is opting out of onsite use. Supervisor Finch stated they are dispensaries, smoke shop, lounge and café.

Michelle Williams stated a dispensary is like going to a liquor store where the café is like going to the bar for a drink but you can't sell marijuana while selling alcohol. Neva Wartell asked to review the options again. Supervisor Finch stated the first is to be silent, the time expires and the town allows both. The second option is to opt out of both and the third option is to select which to opt of or to opt out of both.

Doreen Davis discussed the issue from an economic perspective and reviewed the loss of revenue/assessed value from the closure of the cement plants and how the town is still at a loss of revenue from 2008. This is a legalized industry and gave the example of the revenue received by Great Barrington from sales of marijuana; \$3 million. She also stated if the board decides to opt out we can always opt back in. This will be a regulated industry. She stressed the importance of getting in at the beginning because if we don't then people will stop at other places, spend their dollars there. This is an opportunity for the town to generate revenue and is strongly in support of sooner the better.

Sandra Cantu stated she lived in CA and worked in the cannabis industry. If the town does not take advantage of this opportunity, you are losing out. She stated cannabis has survived the pandemic. Supervisor Finch appreciated everyone's input and insight and stated he personally feels if we wait on the dispensary side, people will go someplace else. An audience member stated dispensaries are also for medical use.

Mercedes Brantley is pro marijuana and believes this will bring in more tourists and they will spend money here.

Sara stated lounges are not bars and are not rowdy places. If you go to a lounge, you hang out, you shop, and you go to restaurants. It will bring jobs and business and a lounge is a great idea. Supervisor Finch stated his view on lounges is different as how is someone to get home. In the Village people can walk. Dan asked if he asked that question to a bar. Councilwoman Scannapieco stated lounges are

more upscale and it can create new businesses, Uber or Lyft. Neva Wartell stated she is for both but her concern is people making money are people who have made money from the industry and have the money to invest. She would like to see a local startup instead of a corporation. Councilman McCulloch stated in the Village the LDC may get involved. Supervisor Finch stated the lounge aspect will help the local restaurant owner or business which is one upside of a lounge.

Lester stated there is a distinction between lounges in the village and town. He lives on Route 32 and believes it is a growth opportunity for the town. Lounges are attractive prospects for Airbnb's. He stated the real consideration is the cost of doing nothing. He doesn't want to see money going to Hudson or Great Barrington.

Dan Arshack stated he feels a consensus that the direction would be missing the train if you don't get on. He asked where the marijuana would be coming from as it is currently a federal offense to cross state lines. Greene County is an agricultural community and we have the land to grow and it is legal for farmers to grow. This will start to employ farmers and support them. Keep the income and the product here. It will help eliminate illicit businesses as there will be no profit any longer. Councilwoman Scannapieco stated it will be pure marijuana and not laced with something you don't know either. Mr. Arshack stated he welcomes dispensaries and lounges.

Michelle Williams advocated for lounges as being a business owner and stated she supports both. Elliott Matos lives in the village and has lived in the Netherlands and the Dutch government makes 100 million euros annually. Lounges are an important part of the business. It provides a safe space to engage.

Crane Davis stated lounges would drive business. The question of people being on the road, they are now. Doreen Davis stated Hunter is ready to pull the trigger and whatever can be done from an economic perspective to have businesses come to Catskill, should be done; welcomed and encouraged.

Supervisor Finch asked if there was any further comment. Justin stated he lives in Leeds and is in support of all activity. Dan Arshack asked the objection to a lounge. Supervisor Finch stated he needs more information to make a decision. Dispensaries are an easy decision. He isn't against lounges it is just an easier decision on dispensaries. Mr. Arshack stated you either do or you don't and to jump into the deep end and do it right. Supervisor Finch stated if we decide to opt in we will need to market. Councilman Vosburgh stated the state needs to give guidance. Doreen Davis stated the first thing is for the town to make a decision and then look at the data to see which town in the state is an option. Crane Davis stated if the board's decision is to opt out it can be taken to a permissive referendum.

William Hawthorne stated there should be dispensaries and coffee shops. It takes it out of the back alley and makes it safe. The coffee shops are key to make it safe for usage. The town should specifically vote to do this and be proactive.

Supervisor Finch thanked everyone for their comments. He stated we received eight emails and one is against. He also mentioned Councilman Giordano's input which is for both dispensaries and lounges.

RESOLUTIONS:

Resolution # 111-2021 on motion of Councilman Vosburgh second by Councilman McCulloch appointing Albert Gasperini as an alternate to the Zoning Board of Appeals. Adopted Vote: 4 Yes 1 Absent (Giordano)

Resolution # 110-2021 on motion of Supervisor Finch second by Councilman McCulloch to accept the certiorari settlement with HD Development of Maryland Inc. (Home Depot). Adopted Vote: 4 Yes 1 Absent (Giordiano)

SUPERVISOR COMMENTS:

Supervisor Finch stated an invoice was sent to the property owner on S. Jefferson Avenue for the maintenance of the grinder pump and sewer lateral as this was a neglect item and lack of maintenance.

ARPA monies for bonuses of employees who worked through COVID. This can wait until the December meeting. Everyone was given the spreadsheet and it can be reviewed again. The total amount to employees is \$38,250. He spoke with the collective bargaining representatives and they are in agreement. *Resolution # 112-2021 on motion of Councilman Vosburgh second by Councilwoman Scannapieco to use ARPA funding for a one-time premium payment to employees who worked from February 1, 2020 to January 31, 2021 as follows: FT Ambulance \$1,000 PT Ambulance \$500; FT Town Hall and Highway \$500 PT Town Hall & Highway \$250; FT Cemetery \$750 PT Cemetery \$350. Elected officials excluded. Adopted Vote: 4 Yes 1 Absent (Giordiano)*

Highway Purchase – Councilman McCulloch stated Shawn received a quote to purchase a loader with payment after January. He can sign the agreement and hold it for 90 days. Councilman Vosburgh stated the amount is \$5,000 less than budgeted. Supervisor Finch stated it is in stock. *Resolution # 113-2021 on motion of Councilman Vosburgh second by Councilman McCulloch authorizing the Highway Superintendent enter into an agreement with United Construction & Forestry to purchase a 2022 John Deere Loader in 2022 not to exceed \$160,000. Adopted Vote: 4 Yes 1 Absent (Giordiano)*

With no further business a motion to enter into executive session inviting the Town Attorney and Town Clerk to discuss a personnel issue was made by Councilman McCulloch second by Councilman Vosburgh. No further matters will come before the board after the executive session. Executive session began 7:58 pm.

Motion to end the executive session and the meeting was made by Councilwoman Scannapieco and seconded by Councilman McCulloch. Meeting ended 8:44 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Izzo
Town Clerk