

Brunswick Explores Adult-Use Cannabis Business Operations

Brunswick Considers Allowing Adult-Use Cannabis Operations During Economic Development Committee Meeting

The city of Brunswick is beginning to explore the possibility of permitting adult-use cannabis operations, as initial discussions took place at an economic development committee meeting on Monday. The conversation, spearheaded by Law Director Dennis Nevar, centered on whether to allow dispensaries, processors, and cultivators to operate within the city limits under Ohio's newly adopted recreational cannabis provisions.

Local Control Over Cannabis Operators

Nevar explained that under the Ohio Revised Code, municipalities have the authority to adopt ordinances that can prohibit or limit the number of adult-use cannabis operators within their jurisdiction. These operators include those who are involved in processing, cultivating, or dispensing cannabis products.

However, Nevar pointed out that the state of Ohio controls the issuance of dispensary licenses. Currently, dispensaries with existing medical licenses have been grandfathered into the recreational cannabis program. Beyond those, only 50 additional licenses are available, making it uncertain whether Brunswick could accommodate new dispensaries anytime soon.

"It's very possible that even if somebody wanted to come to the city of Brunswick and have a retail dispensary, at this point, I don't think there's permits available," Nevar said. "There very well may not be permits available for a couple years out."

Financial Implications of Cannabis Sales

Economic Development Director Grant Aungst highlighted the financial structure of cannabis sales, noting that a 10 percent excise tax is imposed on adult-use cannabis products. This tax revenue is distributed in several ways:

36 percent goes into the state's cannabis social equity and job fund

25 percent is allocated to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

3 percent covers administrative costs for the Division of Cannabis Control and Department of Taxation

The remaining 36 percent is distributed to municipalities hosting dispensaries

Aungst also clarified that municipalities cannot impose additional taxes beyond the standard 10 percent excise tax, which is set by the state. "The municipal corporation is not allowed to impose additional taxes

beyond that 10 percent excise tax and beyond the taxes that are customarily charged to businesses like income taxes,” Nevar added.

Potential Economic Benefits for Host Cities

Fadi Boumitri, CEO of Northeast Ohio cultivation facility Ascension BioMedical, spoke at the meeting, emphasizing the potential economic advantages of hosting dispensaries. He pointed to data from Ohio’s Division of Cannabis Control, which reported \$55 million in nonmedical cannabis sales from August 6 to September. Boumitri argued that cities with dispensaries stand to benefit from a share of those sales.

“Those dispensaries making adult-use sales are guaranteeing the host city that they’re in is going to get a portion of that,” Boumitri said. He also warned that if cities opt out of allowing dispensaries, they risk losing funds that would otherwise flow into their community from cannabis sales.

Uncertain Revenue Projections

Despite the potential benefits, Aungst expressed caution about overestimating the financial windfall from cannabis sales. He pointed out that cities with medical dispensaries have not experienced significant cash flow from cannabis-related taxes.

“Depending upon what people think about dispensaries in general, they think there’s going to be a big cash flow coming in,” Aungst said. “There’s not a big cash flow from medical marijuana. All my colleagues I spoke to about that said it was not a big cash flow across the board.”

The exact revenue for cities hosting dispensaries remains uncertain, as the Office of Budget and Management has not yet determined when or how often funds will be distributed to host municipalities.

Public Support for Adult-Use Cannabis in Brunswick

During the November 2023 election, Brunswick residents demonstrated strong support for the legalization of recreational cannabis. According to data from the Medina County Board of Elections, 58 percent of Brunswick voters supported Issue 2, the statewide initiative that legalized adult-use cannabis in Ohio. Every precinct in Brunswick saw more “yes” votes than “no” votes on the issue.

City Deliberations Ongoing

While Brunswick residents largely favor cannabis legalization, the city has yet to decide whether to allow recreational-use cannabis operators to set up shop. Discussions are ongoing, and city leaders are expected to take community input and economic considerations into account before making a final decision.

For now, the future of adult-use cannabis operations in Brunswick remains uncertain, with further deliberations expected as the state’s cannabis market continues to evolve.

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