

Despite state and local approval, Windham's recreational pot sales may be months away

“It’s taken the state and municipalities years to figure this out and they’re expecting the businesses to figure this out in a week,” said one business owner.

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WINDHAM — Recreational marijuana may not be available for purchase for several months in Windham, but the wait will be worth it for lower prices, say owners of the two businesses approved for recreational.

The Town Council awarded Charles “Shaw” Dwight of Paul’s Boutique Nursery and Joel Pepin of Jar Cannabis Co. recreational marijuana business licenses last month, but the two are waiting to begin sales until there’s a more robust wholesale market.

“The medical market is very strong and it’s competitively priced,” said Dwight in an interview earlier this week.

There is a significant difference in cost between medical and recreational marijuana. A one-eighth ounce of medical marijuana in southern Maine may

range from \$30-\$60. Recreational marijuana ranges between \$50-\$65 for the same amount.

Dwight said he won't "abandon" his medical marijuana clientele while recreational prices are so high. "It's just a horrible business plan," he said.

Dwight sold his contracting business and moved to Casco from Charlotte, North Carolina, in 2014 to enter Maine's marijuana market. He co-owns the store on Crimson Drive, which opened last year, and the cultivation and manufacturing facilities next door, with his wife, Julia Ann Glen Dwight.

There's a greater demand than supply, which is driving up prices, said Dwight, who served on Windham's Marijuana Establishments Task Force.



Jar Cannabis Co. at 11 Storm Drive in Windham. *Emily Bader / Lakes Region Weekly*

Maine mandates that cultivators receive local and state approval to grow marijuana intended for recreational sales, which must be separate from operations cultivating pot intended for medical sales. That law is contributing to the supply shortage, according to Dwight.

The state issued its first recreational cultivation licenses on Sept. 8, but it can take upward of four months to grow and harvest marijuana.

The state began issuing retail licenses Oct. 9.

“It’s taken the state and municipalities years to figure (recreational marijuana sales) out and they’re expecting the businesses to figure this out in a week,” Dwight said, adding that entering the recreational market too soon “could be the demise of my business.”

Joel Pepin, who lives in Standish and co-owns Jar Cannabis Co. on Storm Drive with Adam Platz of Auburn and Ryan Roy of Raymond, said that they don’t want to alienate their loyal medical customers with high prices or insufficient stock.

“We really want to pay our respects (to) our patients who have supported us,” Pepin said Tuesday.

Businesses cannot conduct medical and recreational sales at the same store, so Paul’s and Jar would have to close their medical operations before they could open for recreational sales.

Pepin also co-owns cultivation facilities in Windham and Gorham; the manufacturing facility in Auburn, SJR Labs; and three other stores, in Newry, Portland and South Portland, with Platz and Roy, all of which have been conditionally approved by the state.

Pepin said that they’re hoping to complete the transition to recreational operations by early next year.

Although Dwight said he wasn’t ready to give a start date for recreational sales yet, he said that the business is moving “full steam ahead.”