



NEWS

Windham adult-use marijuana shops will not be open for months; Jar Cannabis Co. awarded license

By Ed Pierce

STAFF WRITER

For those eagerly awaiting the first day in Maine that adult use retail marijuana can legally be sold on Friday, Oct. 9, expectations will need to be tempered. And right here in Windham, it may be months or up to a year before retail adult-use marijuana shops are open and operating.

On Tuesday evening the Windham Town Council gave its final approval for the award of two adult-use retail marijuana licenses, voting to rescind the license of a business that had been awarded a conditional license on Sept. 15, replacing it with another candidate and finalizing the other retail license awarded to Paul's Boutique.

Windham RSL had been awarded a conditional adult-use marijuana license previously by the council, but information received by the town manager concerning the lease contained in its license application was called into question. During a public hearing Tuesday, Councilors Jarrod Maxfield, David Nadeau, Nicholas Kalogerakis and David Douglass voted 4-0 for a finding of fact that without the submission of a master lease or sublease in the application of Windham RSL, the original vote on

Sept. 15 was rescinded and the next highest finisher in their adult-use marijuana retail license scoring system, Jar Cannabis Co., should be awarded the license instead.

The lengthy town and state application hurdles for adult-use retail marijuana and uncertainty about the licenses though, has led to a significant delay in Windham for adult-use retail marijuana shops being ready to open for business right away.

"We will definitely not be ready by Oct. 9," said Shaw Dwight, the owner of Paul's Boutique. "We've been positioning to hope to be awarded a license for over a year and discussing this with the town for over a year. Our company has done its due diligence to be professional with the store. It's now time for my company to start preparing to enter the adult-use market to be successful."

Dwight said rampant uncertainty about state and municipal regulations, ordinances, applications, and licensing has led to a bottleneck in the wholesale marijuana market right now, resulting in exorbitant prices for a limited number of products available and a poor supply to meet the market demand right now.

According to Dwight, the entire pro-

cess of growing, drying and trimming marijuana for retail sales also takes time.

He said his company wasn't ready to invest in a retail cultivation facility to deal with logistical issues and finalize other plans until it knew it was going to have a license and now that it does, the business can move forward.

"We need to prepare this company for the future, but it will take some time, at least a year," he said. "We have a conditional license from the state, but now we can go back and get a true license from the state. You can't put the horse before the cart. We're just trying to set up a plan that will ensure success."

Dwight said he feels that not being totally prepared for what lies ahead for the adult-use retail marijuana business in Maine is naïve.

"Being prepared means being able to control reasonable price points, the availability of extracts and edibles and the consistency to offer a diversity of products," he said. "We're not there just yet, but within six months to a year we will be. Now our work truly begins."

Joel Pepin, who owns Jar Cannabis Company, said he was grateful to have been awarded an adult-use retail license by the council, but like Paul's Boutique, find themselves in a similar place.

"Now that we've gotten local authorization from the town, I think it will take about a month to obtain a license, the state office seems to be moving

quickly."

Pepin said this year many medical marijuana providers have struggled to keep their supplies up for the demand and he expects that to be the case with adult-use as well.

"I don't know exactly when we will make the transition from medical marijuana to adult-use, but we have two facilities and that could only be a couple of weeks," he said. "We've got a lot of patients who are visiting our existing storefront and we want to make it a smooth transition for them and not alienate our existing patient base."

According to Pepin, his biggest challenge going forward will be to keep costs low enough for his existing patients.

"We want those patients to be able to shop with us, but they may find that the excise tax and sales tax costs could go up," he said. "We want our patients to go out the door with products at similar prices."

Because they are vertically integrated where the products they sell come from their own garden and extraction lab, Pepin said that Jar Cannabis Company may initially be behind a bit in selling edible products, but he expects that to all work out over time.

"We're aiming to be up and make the transition to adult-use by the end of the year or within the first few months of the new year," he said. <

