**VOORHEES TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES FOR THE SPECIAL MEETING OF JULY 29, 2019**

**REGULAR MEETING 7:00 PM**

**FLAG SALUTE**

**ROLL CALL** Committeeman Friedman, Committeeman Platt, Deputy Mayor Ravitz, Deputy Mayor Nocito, Mayor Mignogna

**SUNSHINE STATEMENT**

Mr. Long stated that this meeting is being held in compliance with the “Open Public Meetings Act” and has been published as required in the Courier Post and Inquirer Newspapers.

**PUBLIC COMMENT REGARDING MEDICAL MARIJUANA FACILITY OPERATION IN VOORHEES TOWNSHIP**

Mayor Mignogna

This is the public comment regarding medical marijuana facility operation in Voorhees township. The purpose is to receive public comments regarding anticipated requests to site medical marijuana facilities within Voorhees. No applications have been received by the Township and no determinations to accept or reject those facilities have been made by Township Committee. With the advent of legalized medical cannabis in New Jersey the members of this Township Committee are interested in obtaining candid citizen input and comments on this very important issue. So that is why we are here this evening, we are here to discuss the issue, talk about the issue and then move forward. We are fortunate enough to have here tonight perhaps the foremost authority on medical cannabis in New Jersey. With us from Archer Law, Bill Caruso has been kind enough to come this evening to just give a little general overview of some of the issues which will lead into our discussion. So, Bill –

Bill Caruso

Mayor and Council thank you for having this forum tonight and for inviting me. For the members of the audience I am Bill Caruso, I am currently a lawyer at Archer, and I run the firms’ new cannabis practice, which was created a couple of years ago. I also run our firm’s government affairs practice. My background in this is both in the policy level and also as your neighbor. First and foremost, I used to live in town, I used to live at the Club at Main Street with my wife. We were newlyweds we moved in while we were both working at the time for Congressman Rob Andrews. We met while working together as staff there. Our career, my career, has really tracked the metamorphosis of the medical marijuana program. At the time when I started working for the Congressman in 1997, California had just adopted a very radical new law allowing for the ability to use medical marijuana in California. It allowed doctors to recommend medical marijuana in California. Even though it remained illegal at the federal level and remains illegal at the federal level. This is tracked now for almost twenty years this new effort. Fast forward I left congressman Andrews and went up to serve at the State level. I worked for assembly speaker Joe Roberts and then for our current Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver when she was the first African American woman speaker of the general assembly. I was her executive director, I was the head of the staff. I wrote the State’s first medical marijuana law when I was staffed there. It was very controversial in 2009. This was a time that New Jersey was at the forefront, oddly enough. We were in the beginning stages of really being way out front, with the rest of the country still lagging behind. At the time it was very patient centered, but there were a lot of concerns about pushing too fast. There was a crawl, walk, run approach to this, as there should be when it comes to a lot of controversial issues. I’m not going to be partisan here, I’m going to be factual. I worked very closely with Governor Christie, I’m on the Democratic side of the aisle if you couldn’t tell by the people I work for, but I worked very closely from a staff perspective with the Governor from the opposite party, it was my job to. But Governor Christie had different visions for medical marijuana than the folks who worked on the bill with the legislature and frankly where the court of public opinion was, at least now, maybe at the time it was different. So, the program lagged for a very, very long period of time. For almost eight years it was never truly implemented in the manner that most of the folks that thought at the time, who voted for this, figured it would be implemented. It just stalled. It wasn’t expanded, patient populations were not expanded, new diseases that were discovered were not expanded. There were two miracles though during the Christie era. There were two pieces of statutory change that came, one to allow PTSD as a permitted disease and the other was to allow minors, particularly minors with epilepsy, there are bold treatments out there now -bold research out there now to show treatment related to medical cannabis. At the time minors were banned from this program and moreover they were not allowing edibles because they were thought to be to akin to something that would be more used for something recreational. Well we couldn’t allow minors to be smoking cannabis and there weren’t a lot of other delivery vehicles. So, the law was changed to allow minors to access cannabis and for edibles to be dispensed to minors and only to minors. Fast forward to where we are today. At the time this Governor took office there were only about fifteen thousand patients in the medical marijuana program in a State of nine million people. Today we are over the fifty thousand mark. The program has been expanded, that is still not a lot by the way. It is easier now for patients that are in hospice, patients who have profound pain management related to chronic diseases, undergoing chemo and sorts of other types of ailments that are enumerated in the regulations in this bill to easier access to medical cannabis. However, unlike some of our other pier states, we are nowhere close in terms of allowing for safe, affordable and effective, or I should say a higher quality and I don’t want to disparage any of the current operators right now. There are six that are currently open, there are six more that are coming online as a result of the last round. That’s twelve places in the State that you have the opportunity to go buy medical cannabis. They’re not easy to get to for a lot of people who are very ill. You look in other jurisdictions such as Pennsylvania, which has a much newer program, far, far, far greater number of medical dispensary locations. Whether they be stand-alone retail, or even the ability to have a larger supply. We have a supply problem in our State right now, that effects the costs of cannabis. It also effects the quality of what is available to patients. So, that’s about to change. The State legislature just passed an updated statute. I joke when I say you should be careful breaking your arm, patting yourself on the back by updating a bill that’s really a decade overdue, but they do, they did, and I give credit where it is due. This Governor and this legislature on a bi-partisan basis came together to update the medical law. And I’m just going to pause for a second, I am only going to spend time tonight talking about medical cannabis. There is an adult use effort and if questions come up at the end, I will draw the distinction. We do not have adult use legally here in New Jersey right now. It is my understanding that the town governing body isn’t even considering that as it would be imprudent to do so because we do not have that as a statute. This is a discussion about the expansion of medical and what it would mean to this community and then beyond. So, the State’s about to expand. There is a round out right now, there are three types of licenses available right now under this round. Vertically integrated operations. That is everything contained under one roof for one license. What that means is there are really three components to a medical marijuana facility. You have a grow facility. You have a processing facility, which is akin to manufacturing, which sometimes takes the flour and turns it into oil or it’s taking the oil and turning it into other things. Where it deviates from maybe just broad manufacturing is that you can turn it into other types or processing where you could be more akin to a bakery or a candy shop. There is a lot of different innovation where we are seeing that people who are in one walk of life that were involved in some type of food processing may be transitioning over to this. There is some skill overlap there. However, there will not be stand-alone processing endorsement establishments in this round. The third component to these operations is the retail side. So, what is available in this round out of those three endorsements are the one all combined, the vertically integrated, that’s one, you know, effort all together, or a stand-alone grow facility or a stand-alone retail facility. The state right now is very focused on two aspects, growing for increased supply. That’s why you see both the vertically integrated and a separate grow, although I do believe that this round will contain the last endorsements for separate stand-alone grow. There is concern that, while they want to have more, they don’t want to have too much where we have over supply. That becomes a concern too. So, the State has allowed for a limited amount of endorsements now for grow and I expect those to be the last stand-alone if you look at it with the statutory requirements with the bills and the amounts. There will also be four vertically integrated opportunities, one in the north, one in the central and one in the south and one floater. So, South Jersey has the opportunity to have as many as two winners in the vertical round if you include that floater. The last piece, there are five opportunities for retail locations. Again, they are not going crazy right now. Five in the south, five in the central and five in the north for a total of fifteen retail establishments. They will only be retail. No grow, no processing and only medical. This is not for adult use. And by the way I will pause it for a second for one thing on adult use. If you’ve heard that these sites will ultimately be grandfathered as the camel nose under the tent, they will open up medical and sneak up the adult use once this law passes, no. The state will allow a medical facility to grandfather into adult use provided the town says so. So, your town still controls, this is a home rules state, no one has changed that, and no one intends to change that. Let’s talk about what this medical could mean. This next round is going to provide a significant premium on expertise. Especially if it is a vertically integrated establishment. This is going to be very well put together companies that have established experiments in growing and processing cannabis in other jurisdictions. But, with an incentive to partner too with people here in New Jersey who have other expertise, business, community involvement, there’s some law enforcement effort for security reasons, there is a marriage opportunity here, which is what the State is looking for. And this presents opportunities here in our communities. This community has to decide where and what it wants if it wants medical cannabis. But I can assure you that this communities’ citizens are already benefiting from medical cannabis. What we have seen in terms of the growth in medical cannabis in the last few years alone has been significant. Across every age group, every demographic. Doctors now are starting to recognize that one of the impediments to really exploring the benefits of cannabis, and it is not a cure all drug, but it does have profound medical benefits for a variety of ailments. The impediment right now has been the lack of research. So, one of the things that we are going to start to see in this next round is the ability to partner in a variety of different areas with new types of research abilities not just the pot shop on the corner. That what adult use brings you. That’s not what this is. Medical cannabis is going to require the doctor patient ward. So, there is going to be interaction between doctors and patients that will be advising these companies to monitor how these companies will work. We are bringing in national expertise, national funding, national resources to partner with local folks. And what that’s going to allow for us is an incubator in our region. The ability to start looking at taking the research engines that exist here in NJ already, through Rutgers through UMDNJ, through Rowan and all the interesting things that are going on at our university level, here in New Jersey, not across the border in Philadelphia not across the border in NY city but here in NJ. And looking at how we can better apply this medicine to patients here in NJ. I’ll give you an anecdote and this is in NJ right now. A child, one of the nation’s leading hospitals right now is doing work in cannabis. Now they can’t touch the plant because of federal funding issues. My understanding, and I don’t know all of the bells and whistles of this as I don’t work with CHOP directly anecdotal, but they are working to test the blood of children that are involved in medical cannabis programs to look at different peculiarities and the different blood samples that they are taking to track the blood supply. So, they found that their little shoehorn end of this, they can work with blood, they can do blood testing, they just can’t touch cannabis. Lots of different medical resources now are trying to find a way in, for a lot of reasons but mostly they want to understand this drug better and right now we have more research coming in offshore. In Israel, Canada, Columbia, India which is phenomenal, but it’s not in New Jersey. Jersey’s built for this too. We are a farmer research economy; we are a medical research economy we are an agriculture economy. We are the garden state. So again, for the institutions, there are variety and opportunities to partner here in New Jersey with these types of recourses, so for this community you’re lucky and I’m not saying this because I’m standing here in front of you. You have a very thoughtful governing body that is going to do right by your town. We work very well together, and I think they find what works. This is a community that has tremendous resources and tremendous opportunities. However, you are also in a transition. I joked I walked through here for a half an hour, through this mall. Mayor, I swear I tried to buy something I was in Boscov’s and I wanted to come to you and say I actually purchased something in town, but this is also a community in transition. So, it’s not like we can look here and say we don’t need economic development we don’t need new jobs. I’ll shut up because I don’t want to go too long, but I just want to say one more thing. I know I said I was a member of this community; well I am a member next door. I moved out of Voorhees a couple years ago because my wife and I found a house in Berlin. We live in Berlin Borough. My children are thirteen, eleven and nine. My goal is not to have them succumb to some horrible issue related to opioid overdose, but I know I’m going to deal with that. I know were going to grapple with that as parents. I want my kids to have the best just like every parent wants to have the best. I want them to be able to work in a job in an environment that I think instills in them the proper work ethic, the curiosity to continue in their education but also to make money, let’s be blunt. We are not doing a great job in NJ right now looking at innovative economy. We are not doing a great job at that. We are letting a lot of good things pass us by. So, the criticism that might come from the audience is ‘okay Mr. Pot you’re going to hang your hat on marijuana. I am. I’ll tell you why. I see something here and I have that’s why I got involved in advocacy level, the NAACP and the ACLU back in 2014 and God bless my firm as a very new attorney, I said ‘I want to get involved in this’. It’s illegal, technically unethical all these things, right? I still want to do it. They were like ‘go, stay out of trouble, but have fun’. I did this because I want to start bringing in new opportunities into this state. For my kids, for your kids we need to start looking at things like this. I didn’t pick something like nuclear fusion, I didn’t pick green energy. I picked this because I watched what other states were doing, but I also picked this because I dealt with the patient community. And the patient community has been screwed over time and time again. They have not gotten the help that they deserve, and NJ is just now coming out of that darkness. We have the ability to turn this engine on. I am going to leave you with this. One of my colleagues just got back, he took one of his young daughters to Florida I guess their first Walt Disney World vacation and he sent me a text it was in a strip mall somewhere and he goes, there are two medical dispensaries in this strip mall in Florida and I said really? He said how is that even possible? I said because it’s Florida. NJ doesn’t have any two that are anywhere close to each other right now, and I’m not sure that we need like Taco Bell where there is one on every corner, but we do need more right now and this community has an opportunity to be a part of that or if you’re not, you have the opportunity to be working in this region or in one of these places or your family might be. Or a family might have the benefit to closer proximity to the medicine they need. That’s what we’re talking about here. That’s all we’re talking about here right now. I am happy to answer any questions if the committee would permit me too. If the audience has any, I am absolutely happy to answer any questions you may have.

Larry Schriber

39 Manor House Drive, Cherry Hill

Quick questions, will the Township allow as it stands to recreational, what are your feelings on, you know, if somebody gets a medical license and then will you guys grant the recreational?

Mayor Mignogna

Recreational is illegal.

Mr. Schriber

I understand that, barring it passes?

Mr. Platt

It’s like Phillip says it all depends on the facility, it depends on how they are operating. It would depend on the criteria that you make sure it’s a well run place. Basically, that’s how I would look at it. I haven’t even thought about that yet because we’re just not there yet. But it would depend on the facility.

Mr. Long

Maybe this will give you a little bit of comfort because Bill will correct me if I am wrong, I am sure. If there was a recreational marijuana bill that is passed, there is a post passing opt out period for municipalities, correct?

Bill Caruso

On the last version of the statue, yes, but again there will probably be a version that will be updated.

Mr. Long

Ninety days?

Bill Caruso

The town would have an opportunity to opt out, but even if you did even if you missed the deadline. Anyone who comes to you saying, oh we’re doing recreational, you must approve it.

Mr. Schriber

Thank you

AJ Rastogi

1 Barney Lane, Voorhees

I am a board-certified pain specialist and my practice that we started is called North American Spine & Pain. We grew from two physicians in two offices to four states eighteen clinicians and we are seeing approximately one hundred thousand patient visits a year. I myself trained at the University of Virginia for medical school and the University of Penn for my residency and my fellowship. We’ve tried to create a place where you get true comprehensive pain and spine care and I think we’ve done that. We have been early adopters of anything we can use to reduce or prevent the use of opioids at our practice for our acute and our chronic pain patients and medical marijuana has been a great advantage and a humongous tool to our practice. There has been in the early days, a lot of fighting just the stigma among patients that thought medical marijuana was another form of getting high, right? We’ve done better with that, that’s gotten better. For me personally I have seen tons of patients benefit from it, who especially, patients with GI disorder, chrome’s disease. I have patients who would get flashes of abdominal pain and would be going to whatever ER they could go to do get drugs because that is what would help them with their visceral pain, it’s approved for that type or pain. I would write them letters so that the chief of the ER’s at each of these hospitals, which I’m credentialed with. I have credentials at Virtua, Jefferson, Princeton, Penn Medical Center, Cooper. We had to explain to them that this was a specific patient that if they got these drugs and came to your ER they are not a drug seeker. So, when medical marijuana came out we put these patients on medical marijuana and for their GI disorders they did phenomenally well. Their opioid medications went down, their visits to the ER diminished or stopped altogether and their quality of life has improved considerably. So, if medical marijuana is done right it can really, really help address this ever-increasing opioid crisis that we are living in. We were helpful in trying to explain to the Board of Health that having a patient come to a Dr. every three months to get recertified is an increased expense and an inconvenience. That is changed now, you only have to go to the Dr. once a year once you are established. We hope to see further changes so that the cost of medical marijuana continues to go down. We’ve heavily focused on expanding the technology side of it. So, we have a genetic test that you can run now on patients. If they take the tests, they will understand which products they will do better with. Things such as CD to THC ration, things that a lot of people don’t know about, such as terpenes. This will hopefully help them pick the right product from the get-go, less trial and error, less expense out of pocket. So, for us this has been a huge benefit, a huge help and we are very, very excited about what the future brings. I’d be happy to answer any questions.

AUDIENCE MEMBER ASKS QUESTION

Oh my god, no. No. The only time I saw it was in college and it was definitely not for medicinal purposes. So yeah, I am amazed. It is a real change. To think it all started with the whole hemp and newspaper thing is crazy. Any questions?

Mr. Platt

What do you see other practices who take care of pain medication how are they expanding as far as their use is concerned and what are they doing for supply?

AJ Rastogi

From a pain management standpoint, it is very fractured. You could go to one pain management physical and he or she only dabbles in medication management. You go to another and they only do injections, you go to another and they only do surgery and another they will only do therapy. So, one of the things that we say is, going to four different doctors doesn’t’ make sense when you’re in pain, so if you come to one of our full-service locations you can get all of those services under one roof. And because we can communicate with each other and if we think you are someone who can be bettered by medical marijuana, we’ll let the other providers know that so they can all talk, and we can get a uniformed decision. I’ve had certain practitioners say I agree with medicinal marijuana, but you can’t be on any other sedatives. So that took them off all of their pain medications all of their anxiety medications, Xanax etc., because they were concerned of over sedations and they said no drinking whatsoever. Which to me, is a little too black and white. There are benefits to each of these agents and if you use them each appropriately and safely you might do better for that patient than if you make them choose between this and that. So we have seen that a lot. We have seen other providers who still think that it is just another way for the patient to, you know, become addicted. So, they were somewhat ill informed about that as well. They thought marijuana was more addictive than opioids. The number of deaths that have occurred from opioids is from twelve to one hundred thousand, the number of deaths that occurred from marijuana is zero and this is not to say that marijuana isn’t dangerous, it does have its dangers. I think driving under, intoxicated, the effects of medicinal or recreational marijuana are things we are going to have to battle with in the future. But just from a population safety perspective it is a safer agent than a lot of the things that we use now.

Mr. Friedman

I agree with everything you are saying. I think it is important that we expand, this is my own opinion or course. I think it’s important to expand access to patients. I think there is a lot of validity to it and many benefits to medical marijuana. Having said that is you are doing to have folks, who are going to have retorts, for a lack of better words, that marijuana is a gateway drug and it will lead to all of these other things. What is your response if someone did say this is bad for our community, this is bad for our residents because it is simply a gate way drug which is going to increase dependency on other drugs and you may not be an expert on that, but I’d like to hear your opinion on the answer to that.   
  
We are one of the few places that identify addiction early on because we are doing testing for, we’re insuring that are patients are complying and if they’re not then we’re sending them to rehabilitation centers to get the services they need. To answer that questions, when marijuana is not legal people will find a way to get it and when they get it they get if from a non-government sanctioned site. It could be made on someone’s counter-top and if that person is already dabbling in making illegal substances. They may be dabbling in making other substances and you may get cross contamination. We’ve had some patients who have tested for marijuana, deny that they are taking cocaine, but their urine shows up positive for cocaine. Or methamphetamines or harder more dangerous drugs. The addiction level of opioids is the likability of an opioid it’s more likeable to someone than say marijuana. We note that for a fact and that’s not to say that marijuana is not addictive, its just less addictive. So, the idea that it is a gateway drug, per say, I think is potentially there if it is not available to the public in a legal manner. But if it is, they you are getting it at a government sanctioned site. You’re getting something that is made, or at least the idea is to get something that is made, responsibly compared to something that is being made informally.

Mayor Mignogna

Thank you very much that was very informative.

Chleo Kirkland

10 Woodglen Lane

I have been a Voorhees resident for about thirty plus years. Also, I had a knee replacement and a hip replacement, and I played tennis this morning. I only say that because through all of that when I had those things done, the first thing they gave me for pain was an opioid. I was a former football player and very rarely took an aspirin. But the opioid that they gave me made me very groggy and all of those things. Soon after that I discovered CDB, you know for the pain. As I said before I had knee replacement and hip replacement and I could play tennis this morning. I am a real proponent of it. I never until I had this surgery, have had any interaction with marijuana or any plant like that but I can testify to what it has done for me as far as pain. Because I know that the strong opioids that they had me on and me having never had any of that stuff before, would certainly have done some serious damage. One of the questions I have to ask the committee is if you are considering a grow facility or a dispensary have you also considered what area you might want it in, because I think that that would be something that we would need to know sooner versus later.

Mayor Mignogna

Yes, we are actually having our planning board investigate what they think might be appropriate locations. They have had some potential suggestions. That study will continue if we move forward with any kind of action as to where it would be. We do know that they have recommended certainly that it not be located near any churches, schools, parks, fields, day care centers so if we do move forward with it, we would in conjunction with the Planning board with what would be an appropriate place. So yes, we have thought about that and will continue to focus on that.   
  
Mr. Platt

We have identified certain areas basically for retail for growing for processing, different, not every facility can do everything. So, there are certain areas in town that would be better of for growing, processing as opposed to the retail. Again, we try to set them away from all o the areas mentioned. For safety reasons and just to make sure that everyone is okay with where they are and that they are not going to be any kind of attraction to people who shouldn’t be there.

Mayor Mignogna

Thank you

Chad Puschel

7 Fairview avenue

I come here as a resident and also as a patient of medical marijuana. I have been on the program; I was actually one of the first one hundred patients in the state to be registered and I have MS and I was diagnosed in 2005. For the first five years of my diagnosis they put me on all sorts of different medications and just sent me out the door. It wasn’t until around 2010 where I actually started to experiment off the record. I learned how much it controlled all of my symptoms. Form that point on my life has completely improved. So, I don’t want to get too personal about it, but moving on to the economic side of this. I haven’t looked at the budget at all but I would think we would need the extra money that we would get from this so I think it would be a smart fiscal decision to go along with that. So, I just wanted to add to the record that I am 100% supporter of it. Thank you for the opportunity to talk.

Scott Affrime

Holistic Center

My name is Scott Affrime and I represent a company called the Holistic Center. My family is here. I am an accountant for most of my adult life, CFO, My brother, as some of these things are being talked about has researched marijuana his whole life. My other brother ran CVS’s for twelve years. So we feel like we have a kind of an expertise to come to you and present ourselves as a possible dispensary, would it be okay to talk a little bit about what we would like to do for you as a company or is this appropriate?

Mayor Mignogna

I think what I would like to do is to get the public input on the issue itself because that is the purpose of this this evening. I think your presentation would be better served if any when we decide that it is something that we want to do. There are a number of people that we would certainly like to hear from but if we move forward with this certainly, we will have many opportunities to present from a business standpoint your request.

Do

Mr. Affrime you think it’s possible that you will be handling this under the current RFA or is this something for more of the future?

Mr. Long

I think that it is too tight with the deadline of August 21st, whatever it happens to be. I don’t see how we can get from this hearing to that point for those of you who might be interested. The next round of applications would are, I heard something today from Mr. Caruso in another meeting in another jurisdiction. That these applications could be three thousand pages and cost

Mr. Affrime

There is a max of three hundred.

Mr. Long

At substantial expense to put together. Given where we are in the process we are probably, if there is going to be an affirmative decision, we are looking at past the August deadline for these submissions of the four pending licenses as described by Mr. Caruso

Cindy Whiner

12 Tulane Avenue

I also happen to be in commercial real estate, and I am aware somewhere that there have been some meetings. Archer and Greiner has spoken about medical marijuana. There are certain towns that have not accepted it because of the confusion between what is approved federally and what is approved in the town. Maybe you would like to speak a little bit about that?

Mr. Caruso

The challenge here that this is the oddest thing I have ever encountered in both in my policy life and as an attorney when the State is saying we’re okay with what you’re doing, and the federal government is saying we’re not. It is a real challenge in figuring that out. That said, what we are operating under is, every other state that has done this is doing fine right now. The momentum moving at the federal level is that the federal government is starting to adopt slowly a lot of what were starting to see happening in the States at the medical level. There are bills moving in congress right now for the first time and they are not on the president’s desk yet, but they are moving on a bipartisan basis. But this is still illegal at the federal level and I can’t provide for you any legal justification why we are doing what we are doing here at a local level or a state level, but we are. It is not in an y way going to jeopardize anything that this town’s governing body is going to do. The federal government isn’t going to be rushing in because that hasn’t happened in any other jurisdiction. It was a bigger issue a couple years ago and there were some questions with the change of administration coming over would this new administration, meaning the Trump administration provide such a crack down with the authority to do that. Would the US attorney, who is newer, that’s not going to happen. On the medical side, primarily, you are very safe. On the adult use side, again another jurisdiction that hasn’t happened either. But this is illegal at the federal lever. What the State has done, the State has adopted a law that has been on the books since 2009 and at the time since 2009 there have been six other jurisdictions in our state that have been fine with having a cannabis facility in their towns. You have in our region Bellmawr and Egg Harbor have had them since 2009, 2019. The State has given the municipality the permission to allow this and the federal government has basically said, we’re not going to look and that’s the best way I can describe it to you. But there is no jeopardy here, the issue would be primarily, there would be some issue with the facility. They are so highly regulated, the state checks them on such a regular occurrence, you would have more of a likelihood of some criminal activity in some warehouse that has something unrelated to cannabis than you would for something happening with this that would trigger federal involvement with the federal government or the state in some way. It just hasn’t happened. The other thing I wanted to add while I was up here on that vein, you talk about opioid use. In every jurisdiction that has adopted medical marijuana, opioid use has gone down and some of is that starting to make sense, and I think the Dr. can comment on this as well. You are seeing in pain management practices where opioids were prescribed at a very high rate, these doctors now have the confidence to prescribe medical marijuana, not to eliminate opioids entirely, but to reduce those doses down to safer levers, and I’m not the medical dr. but I see you nodding in the back, but we are seeing this in every jurisdiction that has medical marijuana. And that is a profound public quality of life issue, if we can tackle that issue too and that goes to affordability that goes to access, that sort of thing. You can been a pioneer, you have been a trend setter, but more of your colleagues are adopting and are more comfortable because there are more people like you who have already done so, but it is illegal at the federal level. But I think that will change after the next federal election, but it is still illegal at the federal level.

Cindy Whiner

Yeah, because I know of some town where it wouldn’t be well suited that in NJ southern new jersey unfortunately turned down dispensaries, because of the federal law. Not that I am personally against it.

It may be the federal law or it may be the excuse the town governing body just isn’t ready for this. The town has to decide if it’s comfortable and its going to depend on who is standing in front of you, where they are standing or where they are looking to stand with their location. You mentioned talking with your planning board, which is smart, you’ll figure this stuff out the right way. I think what you also heard from your town governing body here, which may be to some of the folks who are involved of business to their detriment, you are not rushing to make this decision which I think is smart. You are setting your won deadlines. Not on the state to set up a deadline for you, you’ll find your way you’ll get there. There will be many opportunities. There will be more rounds following this one that is out right now. I don’t think there is a rush, but the state has said, this is my opinion, we’re going to let the town’s make the decision of what works best for them. Voorhees may decide to do this, Gibbsboro may decide not to. Voorhees may decide not to do this, and Winslow may decide to do this instead. There may be benefits and there may be detriments to that decision, but the town governing body is going to decide like they do with everything, which makes good sense for them. And respectfully, don’t expect the federal government, their view on this is almost irrelevant on this right now. They have taken themselves out of this game. This illegality on the federal government has become more of a technicality at least for medical marijuana

Mayor Mignogna

Thank you.

Jared Steimontellos

1004 Gregory’s way

My wife has had three reconstructive knee surgeries in the past six years. The first surgery that she went through she was prescribed opioids and she was taking this medication for five days. So, having to give your wife this medication that she so clearly does not want because it makes her feel so awful is one of the worst things I’ve ever had to do. It was absolutely heart breaking. The second surgery she had to go through, same surgery. Except this time around the third or fourth day I was obtaining marijuana through a source that was not medical, but I knew it worked I’ve had plenty of friends who are doctors, she works for a pain management group in Pennsylvania.

Mr. Long

You didn’t hear that, right chief?

Mr. Stiemontellos

She has a medical card now, so, it’s all in the house. You’re not going to find it, I don’t touch the stuff it’s okay. I appreciate that. The microphone went out. So, yeah, third time around she now is a participant in the medical marijuana program. She was on opioids for thirty-six hours. It was an amazing turn around. She was not only able to recover quicker, but she was able to recover way more healthily. She was not a drone stuck on the couch for a week. So, after the third day she was up and moving she was able to get up and actually function as a human, thirty-six hours after having every ligament in her knee replaced. So, I just wanted to voice my opinion and say I am vehemently for this. I think if it doesn’t come to Voorhees it will go somewhere else and we will be missing out on a major opportunity. I have a personal friend in in town council in Somerdale and they missed out on one, or they didn’t miss out they opposed, and they passed on it. I think that’s missed opportunity, just the money alone. We all know the money is there, you can’t dispute the money is there. I think you guys and lady, sorry, are taking a fantastic path forward on this, taking your time and being smart about this is a good way to get it done safely and to get public opinion pushed in the right direction. So, thank you.

Nicki Shaw

8 Third Street

We all know that this is medically proven, that medical marijuana works. However, there is also an incentive for town if I’m not mistaken. And I think if Mr. Caruso could talk on that I think there is an extra two or 3.4 percent of taxes.

Mayor Mignogna

Yes, Bill if you could also give us an explanation of the economics of it.

Mr. Caruso

So, and Chief you and I had a chance to talk about this. There are two different levers of funding and I will talk about adult use. So, there’s not a lot on the medical side and frankly a lot of us believe in the patient’s side that the medicine shouldn’t be taxed. This law that passed allowed for a small, small 2% tax that will accrue, now as the sales tax phases out. This isn’t going to be life changing money for the town. On the recreational side, that is where things change to some extent. There is going to be money raised through the state program that is already dealing with things that we deal with, that the Chief has to deal with right now. We have people driving under the influence of controlled substances, whether it be cannabis medical or illegal, opioids, alcohol, NyQuil whatever it may be. With the exception of alcohol there is not test for cannabis. So, the chief and his officers, what they are required to do is to use a drug recognition officer that is trained to spot different types of behavior and to certify that there was something in terms of being under the influence. We don’t have enough of those, we don’t have enough drug recognition officers now and we don’t want you here the citizens and the town governing body, to pay for that. So, one issue is where is that money going to come from and it’s not just the training it’s the overtime costs that the town has to accrue. That isn’t going to come out of medical cannabis, we need that right now. That will come from recreational cannabis that the state fees will fund. Here, and again, there is no law right now, there is no bill right now. There is a question of what is going to happen, the previous iteration of the law allowed for the municipality to levy its own tax on recreation adult use cannabis facilities, both retail, grow and processing. If the city located a medical facility here, you’d get some benefit from that although I don’t know how long that will last, there is a lot of push right now to remove that tax, but if it allowed for adult use recreational it would allow for the additional taxation the town can benefit from, but as I explained to the Chief there will be state revenue funding coming in to help fund other things, replacement of drug dogs, they can’t retrain them, training of drug recognition officer and some other types of general revenue that will go. But I want to be careful though as I talk about the money side of this. This isn’t life changing money. This is another ratable. It will be. It is a job creator, especially if it’s a growing and processing facility. There’s a lot of benefit in terms of, we’ve heard from a lot of your citizens who will have better access here, but I want to be careful in that this isn’t going to, this isn’t millions of dollars of revenue in town that you’ll be able to build a new school, it’s just not that type of money. On the adult use recreational side, depending on what you’re doing, that’s some money that might actually impact your budget to some extent, but I don’t think the medical is going to drive tax revenue other than just being another ratable.   
  
Mayor Mignogna

Thank you

I have actually made a location map of Voorhees of all of the different churches and parks and everything and I just wanted to give you this as well and just very briefly wanted to speak on this issue. We’ve actually already put into our budget a two percent stake into our company for the town that we are located in. I don’t know if any companies who will do that but speaking on the economic impact that is roughly four hundred thousand dollars annually, that is our breakdown. We just wanted to share that with you.

MOTION TO ENTER

EXECUTIVE SESSION: MAYOR MIGNOGNA

SECOND: MR. PLATT

AYES: ALL

NAYS: NONE

MOTION TO LEAVE

EXECUTIVE SESSION: MR. PLATT

SECOND: MR. FRIEDMAN

AYES: ALL

NAYS: NONE

PUBLIC COMMENT FOR RESOLUTIONS ONLY

MOTION TO CLOSE

PUBLIC PORTION: MR. PLATT AYES: ALL

SECONDED: MR. FRIEDMAN NAYS: NONE

RESOLUTION NO. 195-19 AUTHORIZING AND APPROVING A REDEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE TOWNSHIP OF VOORHEES (“TOWNSHIP”) AND BRANDYWINE ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT, LLC (“REDEVELOPER”)

MOTION TO APPROVE: MR. PLATT

SECONDED: MR. FRIEDMAN

AYES: ALL

NAYS: NONE

RESOLUTION NO. 196-19 AUTHORIZING THE ADVERTISEMENT FOR THE SALE OF LAND IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE LOCAL LANDS AND BUILDINGS LAW

MOTION TO APPROVE: MR. PLATT

SECONDED: MR. FRIEDMAN

AYES: ALL

NAYS: NONE

RESOLUTION NO. 197-19 EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION TO ENTER

INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION: MAYOR MIGNOGNA

SECONDED: MR. PLATT

AYES: ALL

NAYS: NONE

COMMENTS FROM COMMITTEE - NONE

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC - NONE

MOTION TO CLOSE

PUBLIC PORTION: MR. PLATT AYES: ALL

SECONDED: MR. FRIEDMAN NAYS: NONE

ADJOURNMENT

**RESOLUTION ­­­­­­­­­­ NO. ­195-19**

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING AND APPROVING A REDEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE TOWNSHIP OF VOORHEES (“TOWNSHIP”) AND BRANDYWINE ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT, LLC (“REDEVELOPER”)**

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to the provisions of the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law, N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1 *et seq*. as amended and supplemented, (the “Act”) the Township has undertaken a program for the redevelopment of certain property identified as Block 150.01, Lots 1, 2, 5 and 5.01, located at the Voorhees Town Center (former Echelon Mall) (the “Project Site” or “Property”). The Redeveloper intends to rehabilitate the former Echelon Mall and construct a high quality, cost-efficient redevelopment project at the Project Site in a time frame that is practicable and commercially reasonable; and

**WHEREAS**, by virtue of Resolution No. 229-17, the Mayor and Township Committee of the Township of Voorhees authorized and directed the Voorhees Township Planning Board to undertake the preliminary investigation of property located at Block 150.01, Lots 1, 2, 3, 5 and 5.01 as a Condemnation Redevelopment Area; and

**WHEREAS**, in accordance with the Resolution adopted by the Mayor and Township Committee, the Planning Board conducted an investigation to determine whether the Study Area should be designated as an Area in Need of Redevelopment and considered an Area in Need of Redevelopment Study for Block 150.01, Lots 1, 2, 3, 5 and 5.01, dated December 27, 2017, prepared by CME Associates; and

**WHEREAS,** Lots 1, 2C001 and 5.01 of the Study Area consists of a mall that has substantially declined and continues to decline at a rapid pace; and

**WHEREAS,** the mall has continued to have a high vacancy rate despite numerous attempts to improve such mall; and

**WHEREAS,** the Planning Board adopted Resolution No. 18-014 recommending that the Mayor and Township Committee designate Block 150.01 Lots 1, 2, 5 and 5.01 (not Lot 3) on the Official Tax Map of the Township of Voorhees as an Area in Need of Condemnation Redevelopment; and

**WHEREAS**, by virtue of Resolution No. 141-18, adopted on May 14, 2018, the Mayor and Township Committee determined that the ANR Area qualified as an Area in Need of Condemnation Redevelopment; and

**WHEREAS,** by virtue of Resolution No. 222-18, adopted on September 17, 2018, the Township appointed the Redeveloper as conditional redeveloper for the Voorhees Town Center – Phase 2 Redevelopment Project; and

**WHEREAS**, by virtue of Ordinance No. 339-19 adopted on January 28, 2019, the Township adopted a Redevelopment Plan for the Project Site; and

**WHEREAS**, Redeveloper maintains that it is in the business of owning, maintaining, and enhancing real property for commercial, residential and other purposes and that it has the financial ability, experience and expertise to redevelop the Property within a reasonable time in accordance with the provisions of the Redevelopment Agreement. The Township and Redeveloper both desire and anticipate that the Project will consist of at a minimum the rehabilitation of no less than 100,000 square feet of the former Echelon Mall to various commercial and retail uses, payment of an Affordable Housing Impact Fee of $500,351.00 together with the option for the Redeveloper to construct market rate residential units at the Project Site; and

**WHEREAS**, as a material inducement to the Township, the Redeveloper has agreed, among other things, to: (i) create a project at the Property that is both aesthetically pleasing and will spark revitalization and substantial investment in this area of the Township; (ii) redevelop the Property in accordance with the Redevelopment Agreement (as may be modified by the Parties, in writing, from time to time and pursuant to the Redevelopment Plan); (iii) reimburse the Township for costs and fees incurred as set forth in the Redevelopment Agreement; (iv) make certain representations and warranties as set forth therein; and (v) tender payment of such escrow, deposits and payments as set forth therein; and

**WHEREAS**, to effectuate the purposes of the Act, the Township and Redeveloper agree to enter into a Redevelopment Agreement attached hereto as Exhibit “A” in order to further the Project which said Redevelopment Agreement is subject to the final review and approval of Township legal counsel.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Township Committee of the Township of Voorhees, County of Camden and State of New Jersey that it hereby authorizes and approves the Redevelopment Agreement between Brandywine Acquisition and Development, LLC, the Redeveloper and the Township, attached hereto as Exhibit “A” further subject to the final review and approval of Township legal counsel; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Mayor of the Township is authorized to execute the Redevelopment Agreement on behalf of the Township and the appropriate Township officials are hereby authorized to take the necessary action in furtherance of the Redevelopment Agreement.

DATED: JULY 29, 2019 MOVED: MR. PLATT

AYES: ALL SECOND: MR. FRIEDMAN

NAYS: NONE APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Michael R. Mignogna, Mayor

I, Dee Ober, Clerk of the Township of Voorhees, do hereby certify the foregoing to be a true and correct copy of a Resolution adopted by the Mayor and Township Committee, at their meeting of July 29, 2019 in the Municipal Building, 2400 Voorhees Town Center, Voorhees, New Jersey.

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Dee Ober, RMC - Municipal Clerk

**RESOLUTION NO. 196-19**

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ADVERTISEMENT FOR**

**THE SALE OF LAND IN ACCORDANCE WITH**

**THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE LOCAL LANDS AND BUILDINGS LAW**

**WHEREAS**, a portion of Block 80, Lot 5, is currently owned by the Township of Voorhees is no longer needed for public purposes; and

**WHEREAS**, it is in the best interest of the Township of Voorhees to advertise this property for public sale to the highest bidder in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 40A:12-1 et seq.; and

**WHEREAS**, the property is identified as Block 80, Lot 5.01, on the draft minor subdivision plan and legal description attached hereto; and

**WHEREAS**, the Township of Voorhees is currently in the process of completing a minor subdivision, the sale of which is subject thereto; and

**WHEREAS**, the Township Assessor has reviewed the subject parcel and rendered a land value in the amount of $48,000.00;

**WHEREAS**, the Township Committee of the Township of Voorhees desires to establish minimum bid prices as set forth herein

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Mayor and Township Committee of the Township of Voorhees, County of Camden, State of New Jersey, as follows:

1. The provisions of the WHEREAS clauses set forth above are incorporated herein by reference and made a part hereof.

2. The Mayor and/or Deputy Mayors, as well as the Municipal Clerk, are hereby authorized to execute any and all documents necessary to accomplish the tasks authorized herein.

3. The properties identified herein shall be advertised for public sale pursuant to all procedural and substantive requirements of the Local Lands and Buildings Law (N.J.S.A. 40A:12–1 et seq.) in a form to be drafted and prepared by the Township Solicitor for the minimum sum of forty-eight thousand dollars ($48,000.00).

DATED: JULY 29, 2019 MOVED: MR. PLATT

AYES: ALL SECOND: MR. FRIEDMAN

NAYS: NONE APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Michael R. Mignogna, Mayor

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Dee Ober, RMC - Municipal Clerk

**RESOLUTION NO.** **197-19**

**AUTHORIZING EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**WHEREAS,** Section 8 of the “Open Public Meetings Act” [NJSA

10:412(b) (1-90] permits the exclusion of the public from a meeting in certain circumstances; and

**WHEREAS,** the Township Committee is of the opinion that such circumstances exist;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED,** by the Mayor and Township Committee of the Township of Voorhees, County of Camden and State of New Jersey as follows:

1. An executive session of the Township Committee was held on July 29, 2019

2. The public was excluded from the executive session and no formal action was taken

3. The general nature of the subjects discussed were:

Contracts/Agreements Brandywine Financial Services

The executive session lasted approximately 20 minutes. Upon adjournment from the executive session the Committee moved back into open session for the adoption of Resolution 195-19.

Information regarding the subject discussion may be disclosed to the public at the expiration of 180 days; at the completion of the litigation, or at the consummation of the transactions discussed, whichever is later.

DATED: JULY 29, 2019 MOVED: MAYOR MIGNOGNA

AYES: ALL SECOND: MR. PLATT

NAYS: NONE APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Michael R. Mignogna, Mayor

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Dee Ober, RMC - Municipal Clerk