



STAFF REPORT

TO: Planning and Development Committee **MEETING DATE:** February 4, 2020
FROM: Lesley-Anne Staats, RPP, MCIP **FILE NO:** 0340-50-Policies
Director of Planning
SUBJECT: Cannabis Policy and Consultation Plan

RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT the report titled Cannabis Policy and Consultation Plan be received;

AND THAT it be recommended to Council that staff forward the Draft Cannabis Policy to the Gibsons and District Volunteer Fire Department, Vancouver Coastal Health, School District 46, RCMP, Gibsons and District Chamber of Commerce, and the Sunshine Coast Regional Economic Development Organization for comment;

AND THAT it be recommended to Council that staff proceed with the engaging the public on the Draft Cannabis Policy per the Survey and Consultation Plan outlined in this report;

AND THAT it be recommended to Council that staff report back to the Planning and Development Committee with feedback received from the public consultation;

AND FURTHER THAT these recommendations be sent to the next Council meeting for adoption.

BACKGROUND / PURPOSE

On January 14, 2020, Council adopted the following resolution:

R2020-04 Zoning for Cannabis Stores and Production Facilities in Gibsons

THAT a policy be prepared which sets criteria for consideration of spot rezoning applications for retail cannabis stores along with consideration of provincial referrals for Town approval of such stores;

AND THAT a policy be prepared which sets criteria for consideration of spot rezoning applications for cannabis production facilities and a zoning amendment which prohibits such facilities except where specifically permitted;

AND THAT the policy comes forward with a communication plan for consultation with the community including the number of stores, the buffer distance from schools, the distance between stores, the size of store and that the policy identify storefront form and character guidelines that do not market to minors;

AND THAT the policy come back to the Planning & Development Committee once drafted;

AND THAT Cascadia Agricultural Co-operative Association, Sunshine Coast Community Futures, Sunshine Coast Tourism and the Sunshine Coast Regional Economic Development Organization (SCREDO) be encouraged to hold a local Symposium for the purpose of coordinating, licensing and supporting local cannabis production within the legalized economy; and Community Futures and SCREDO be encouraged to launch a Cannabis Business Transition program similar to the program in Central Kootenay;

AND FURTHER THAT other local governments on the Sunshine Coast be encouraged to support and advocate for the inclusion of local production in the legalized cannabis economy.

A report to the January 14, 2020 Planning and Development Committee (PDC) brought forward a zoning amendment bylaw which would prohibit cannabis production facilities in Gibsons, and would allow Council to consider any cannabis production facility on a case-by-case basis.

The purpose of this report is to bring forward a Policy for cannabis stores and cannabis production facilities in the Town. This report also outlines a communications plan for consultation with the community as directed by Council.

DISCUSSION

The draft Cannabis Policy, enclosed as Attachment A, sets criteria for consideration of spot rezoning applications for retail cannabis stores and cannabis production facilities along with consideration of provincial referrals for Town approval of such stores/production facilities.

Because local governments cannot forbid cannabis production outright on Agricultural Land Reserve land due to the provincial regulations, this policy considers permitting production facilities in the “Service Commercial / Business Centre” areas, which is in the Town’s industrial area as way of alleviating pressure on ALR land which could then be used for food crops while cannabis producers utilize often less expensive industrial facilities for indoor growing.

Cannabis Policy Summary

Purpose

To create a framework on establishing cannabis retail stores and production facilities in Gibsons. The policy identifies appropriate locations and procedures for processing applications.

Locational Criteria

Cannabis Stores – applications accepted in areas identified as “Mixed-Use Commercial” in the OCP, located more than 150 m from schools, and not located within 100 m of another cannabis store.

Cannabis Production Facilities – applications accepted in areas identified as “Service Commercial / Business Centre” in the OCP, located more than 150 m from schools, and located within 100 m of another cannabis production facility.

Application Procedure

Outlines the procedures that staff will follow to process cannabis store or cannabis production facility applications within the Town of Gibsons, as well as cannabis application referrals from the Province.

Staff note that processing Cannabis store applications include a public approval element under the provincial regulatory scheme, however, there are no provincial referrals for cannabis production facilities. Thus, the public hearing for the zoning amendment would include receiving input on the provincial referral to collect public feedback and process applications more efficiently.

CONSULTATION

The Town hired Impact Resolutions to engage the cannabis retail sales and production stakeholders to solicit opinions on future zoning approaches and business needs and desires. To date, the main concerns heard were that the process and security of Temporary Use Permits are too onerous and uncertain, especially for the long-term investment required to seek a government licence. There is also a need for clarification around the appropriate distance of a cannabis store from schools. The Impact Resolutions report recommended establishing a 150-metre buffer around schools, as measured from the closest property line of a school to the front door of a retail cannabis store. Council might want to regulate a distance between retail cannabis stores so that they do not congregate in one area of Town. The attached draft policy includes a 100 m distance between stores. This distance may change following public consultation.

Public Consultation Plan on Cannabis Policy Development

Council is in the process of developing a cannabis policy for the Town and wants to receive input from the community at large before it proceeds. Industry stakeholders have already been consulted and responses were presented in the December 17, 2019 report to the PDC, which included a consultation report by Impact Resolutions.

To collect additional input, staff will develop a survey which will be available for 30 days on the Town website and widely promoted through various communications channels (Social Media, newspaper ads, digital newsletter).

Staff may also host one Public Information Session, should Council want to do this. The public information session may present information on the Policy, and outline areas where Council is

seeking more information before making a decision. The format of the public information meeting may be a short presentation, followed by a request that attendees complete the survey.

Questions to be included in the survey include:

1. Should there be a cap on the number of cannabis stores/cannabis producers permitted to operate in the Town of Gibsons or should the market determine how many of each exist?
2. Should there be a prescribed minimum distance between cannabis stores?
3. Should there be a prescribed minimum distance between cannabis production facilities?
4. Should there be a buffer zone between schools and cannabis retailers/producers? If so, at what distance?
5. Should the Town include regulations around the exterior appearance of the store/facility in its policy or are provincial regulations sufficient?

While staff considered including a survey question about limiting the size of cannabis stores/facilities, cannabis retailers will likely naturally want to keep their floor space as small as possible, in order to control rent costs and because the products they are selling do not require much space to display and store. Similarly, cannabis production facilities will naturally be limited by the size of the lot on which they are located. Therefore, questions pertaining to the size of the stores/production facilities are not included.

As many respondents won't be familiar with the key issues related to the development of a local cannabis policy, each question/or survey section will be preceded by a short explainer describing the issues to consider, and pros and cons of possible solutions.

Additionally, a copy of the proposed policy will be provided to survey-takers.

Referrals

In addition to the public consultation plan, staff recommends referring the draft policy to the following agencies for comment:

- School District 46
- Vancouver Coastal Health
- Gibsons and District Volunteer Fire Department
- RCMP
- Gibsons and District Chamber of Commerce
- Sunshine Coast Regional Economic Development Organization

POLICY / PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Strategic Plan Implications

The 2019-2022 Strategic Plan includes a core objective to plan for sustainable growth. This includes supporting local businesses and fostering a diverse economy.

Financial Plan Implications

There would be no negative impacts to the Financial Plan.

NEXT STEPS

Following Council's direction, staff will report back with feedback received during the consultation process and recommended next steps.

RECOMMENDATIONS / ALTERNATIVES

Staff's recommendations are on Page 1 of this report. Alternatively, the PDC may recommend a Public Information meeting in addition to the survey, or recommend that the Policy be adopted as written and without further consultation.

Attachments

- Attachment A – Draft Policy

Respectfully Submitted,



Lesley-Anne Staats, RPP, MCIP
Director of Planning

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER'S COMMENTS:

I have reviewed the report and support the recommendation(s).



Emanuel Machado
Chief Administrative Officer