

BUSINESS, HEALTH, LIFESTYLE, NEWS

RECREATIONAL POT COULD BE COMING TO DOWNTOWN LYNN

BY GAYLA CAWLEY | October 14, 2018

LYNN — A recreational pot shop could be coming to downtown Lynn.

Aidan O'Donovan, owner of Natural Selections, has proposed opening the facility at 193 Oxford St., which would be next door to The Blue Ox, an upscale restaurant.

“They have the financial resources and experience to do this,” said James Cowdell, EDIC/Lynn executive director. “There are six (of eight total) recreational licenses that are available right now, and this is on track to be the first one approved.”

The company's proposal has already been vetted by the Economic Development and Industrial Corporation of Lynn (EDIC/Lynn) and recommended to the newly formed Recreational Cannabis Site Plan Review Committee of the City Council.

The group is slated to appear before the committee Oct. 23. The company would then schedule a Ward 5 neighborhood meeting and apply for a special permit with the City Council.

If approved, Natural Selections would sign a host agreement with the city, which would require the company to provide the city with 6 percent of annual gross revenues, when factoring in the 3 percent local option tax Lynn officials passed last year.

The company operates medical marijuana dispensaries in Dorchester and Watertown and recreational pot shops in Salem, Fitchburg, and Colorado. The group also operates its cultivation and processing site in Fitchburg.

Natural Selections applied for and was denied a medical marijuana license with the city three years ago for a proposed site on Western Avenue. O'Donovan said the company has a much better site now.

In 2016, the City Council approved a plan that would bring two medical marijuana clinics to the city, which were limited to Ward 6.

The two medical marijuana licenses have been issued already, to the Newtown-based Massachusetts Patient Foundation, which signed a host agreement with the city to operate on the Lynnway, and to Old World Remedies, a Marblehead company, which plans to open on Western Avenue.

MPF also plans to have an adult-use pot shop component on its site and has had its special permit for recreational sales approved as well. Old World Remedies plans to seek a recreational license as well, which is expected to be approved.

O'Donovan said despite not having a medical license as an option, the group plans to still serve medical patients at the site if their proposal is approved. Customers who show a medical card from a doctor will be discounted by means of not being taxed for their purchase.

"We want their business and we recognize that if we're going to get their business, we're going to have to eat those taxes," O'Donovan said.

The company started leasing the building several months ago, and O'Donovan plans to invest \$750,000 worth of renovations into the space. His hope is to open in the spring.

"I believe the cannabis prohibition went on for way too long and legalization has been long overdue," O'Donovan said. "It's an exciting industry to be a part of. In a regulated environment, (marijuana) could be a safe alternative to alcohol for adults who prefer it. It's a goal of ourselves to contribute to the elimination of the black market."

In 2012, Massachusetts voters approved making marijuana legal for medical use and in 2016, pot for recreational use was approved at the polls.

Ward 5 Councilor Dianna Chakoutis could not be reached for comment by the *Item* deadline.



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