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TREE MARKET'S ADDRESS CHANGE COULD DOOM PLANS FOR LYNN POT SHOP

BY GAYLA CAWLEY | January 14, 2020

LYNN — Tree Market LLC, which has already received City Council approval to open a recreational marijuana shop on Mount Vernon Street, may see their business plans go up in smoke.

The City Council's Recreational Cannabis Site Plan Review Committee voted 2-2 on the company's proposed change in address for the potential business, which would instead be at 212 Broad St.

The split vote from the subcommittee means there was not a favorable recommendation to the full City Council on the company's proposal, which could put a damper on its plans to operate a pot shop in Lynn.

James Cowdell, Economic Development and Industrial Corporation of Lynn (EDIC/Lynn) executive director and James Lamanna, assistant city solicitor, both voted against the Broad Street location. The two said there could be a better use for the site, such as a residential development.

Cowdell cited the location's proximity to the downtown and its zoning that allows for a 10-story development. The site also offers a lot of off-street parking, he said.

"I think this is an underutilization of the site," said Cowdell. "I think we should really be raising the bar for this large of a lot in Lynn for this large of a development. I think we can do much better than this. I think it's a very valuable piece of land."

Lamanna echoed Cowdell and added that putting a shop on Broad Street would mean that it would be competing against two other potential nearby shops. He was referring to Apothca on the Lynnway and a proposed store on Lewis Street that received approval from the site plan review committee on Tuesday night.

“At the end of the day, that would leave money on the table,” said Lamanna.

But Ward 2 Councilor Rick Starbard, chairman of the site plan review committee, and Ward 5 Councilor Dianna Chakoutis, who both voted in favor of the address change, said there’s been no interest in the property from developers. The only interest has been from cannabis companies and furthermore, they said the site is used as a dumping ground.

“No one has expressed interest in this site,” said Starbard. “This would still maintain the two dispensaries downtown.”

The company’s special permit to operate at 3 Mount Vernon St. was approved by the City Council last February. But since Tree Market is now requesting to instead operate on Broad Street, the company would have to relinquish its special permit and would need council approval for the new location.

The change in address is like submitting a new proposal, Starbard said.

Peter D’Agostino, a consultant with Tree Market LLC, said the company needed to find a new location because the MBTA had notified the city that there may be some permitting issues under the bridge on Mount Vernon Street.

The company searched for nearby locations and decided to lease the Broad Street site and its adjacent lot. The company plans to use 50 to 60 of the 88 parking spots and use the rest of the site for storage space, D’Agostino said.

Following the vote, the status of the company’s plans are up in the air. Tree Market could opt to keep its special permit for Mount Vernon Street or the City Council could vote at its next meeting to set down a public hearing for the Broad Street location, said Starbard, who added getting council approval could prove to be difficult for the company.

On the other hand, the Cannabis Site Plan Review Committee, by a 3-0 vote (Lamanna voted present) gave the green light to Diem Cannabis, which is seeking to operate a recreational marijuana shop at 211-217 Lewis St. Later that evening, the full City Council voted to set down a public hearing for the company’s request for a special permit.

It was a change in what the company has seen in the past, as its plans for a shop at 229 Lewis St., or 1 Chestnut, were officially rejected by the City Council last month following substantial neighborhood opposition.

Chris Mitchem, CEO for Diem Cannabis, said the location has much better parking, which was the major concern of abutters with the last location.

“We were very excited that we were able to find a spot that meets the needs and feedback of the community,” said Mitchem.



Gayla Cawley.

Gayla Cawley joined The Daily Item as a reporter in 2015. The University of Connecticut graduate studied English and Journalism. Follow her on Twitter @GaylaCawley.

Gayla Cawley can be reached at gcawley@itemlive.com
