



Minutes
Special Meeting of the Easton Agricultural Commission
June 16, 2021 -- 7:45 p.m.
Held Virtually Via Zoom Video Conference

In attendance Jean Stetz-Puchalski, Denise Hebner, Victor Alfandre, Matt Oricchio, Lori Cochran Dougall

Absent: Irv Silverman, Sage Rega

I: Call to Order – 7:48p.m.; Denise Hebner appointed to vote in place of member Irv Silverman.

II: Approval of Minutes from Last Meeting – Matt Oricchio made a motion. Lori Cochran Dougall 2nd. Motion passed unanimously.

III: Public Comment – Easton Grows, LLC: Jeff Becker (applicant and member of the South Park Advisory Committee), Griff Conti (applicant), Dwight Senior (applicant and member of the South Park Advisory Committee).

IV: South Park Farming Plan Hemp Cultivation Pilot Program Review:

Review of the Hemp Cultivation Pilot proposal submitted to the Ag Com by Easton Grows LLC on June 3. Ag Com facilitated a formal review of the proposal deploying an open Q & A format inviting applicants of the Hemp Cultivation Pilot Program to comment and respond to questions put forth by the Agricultural Commission. Jeff Becker, Griff Conti, and Dwight Senior attended and participated. See attachments for associated documents.

Feedback to BOS discussed by Commission focused on clarifying the purpose and scope of the project, RFP process, proposal/lease considerations. Key concerns raised by the Ag Com: Clarity from Town on purpose and scope of the project. How would Town address Political & Branding issues given Easton is positioned as Hemp growing capital of CT? What is the scope of South Park – is the goal income for Town? Lack of RFP limited applicants for consideration and proposal guidelines: Recommend an RFP to outline proposal expectations and establish a fair and equitable process. Curious about the experience of other Hemp growers in Easton. Advise bringing Ag Com into process earlier once farming is a potential use. It was agreed the Hemp Cultivation Pilot Program Proposal was incomplete and not reflective of the merits of the verbal proposal discussed by applicants at the meeting. Proposed lease was drafted by the applicants using a community Town lease, and not appropriate for a specialty crop and commercial farming scenario. Oversight by the Town to ensure farmer compliance with lease has not been addressed. Additionally, given the regulatory and security requirements that come with this specialty crop, oversight will need to include farmer compliance with regulatory requirements*. The Commission found it difficult if not impossible to return a decision without further considerations:

- Profit sharing model may or may not be in the best interest of Easton if income is a goal: Market risk associated with increased supply of CBD hemp from expanded production is likely to result in declining prices if demand does not increase accordingly (Sterns 2019). Applicant Griff Conti verbally committed to buying the Hemp flower as part of the proposal and lease. We advise this appear clearly in the lease with suggested income range after disclosed expenses to make this an income producing venture for Easton. Sample outlined expenses from Hemp studies seen in attached docs.
- The lease was drafted by applicants versus Town with a fee of \$1 per acre. Advise for profit farming lease fees in the range of \$167 and \$300 per acre.
- Elements for a commercial farming lease were missing and advise consideration include but are not limited to financial considerations, risk management of a specialty crop, need for a farm supervisor, oversight by Town, security, product testing provisions and actions to address remediation if above legal thresholds*.

*Regulatory risk stems primarily from potential shifts in the regulatory and legal frameworks guiding hemp production as well as the requirement of less than 0.3% d9-THC on a dry weight basis, which has become an

important issue faced by early growers. If pre-harvest testing indicates a non-compliant crop, the farm faces a total loss as well as the additional cost of disposal services approved under current guidelines. See attachments to these minutes for more information.

After discussion, Victor Alfandre moved to request that the Town of Easton define the purpose and scope of the South Park property through an RFP process and to define a lease to allow applicants to put forward a proposal that is equitable and meets the needs of the Town. Furthermore, the Easton Grows LLC proposal does not reflect the merits of the project and will benefit with a restatement removing the cost sharing responsibility of Easton, elaborating on the vertical integration that guarantees product distribution and sales, planned security measures, and improved definition of applicant roles. Lori Cochran Dougall 2nd. Motion passed unanimously.

Restatement of South Park Farming Plan; Hemp Cultivation Pilot Program to clarify the following open items:

APPLICANT INFORMATION:

Clearly define the contact information for each applicant, and their role to understand who the Farmer and key contact will be when addressing the lease.

Contact Name.

Role in project.

Phone:

Email:

Address:

HEMP LICENSE INFORMATION:

Provide information on whether a license to grow hemp was issued, to whom, and how long the license is valid.

AGRICULTURAL PROPOSAL:

Clearly define the intent of hemp cultivation, along with the process from planting, to harvesting, drying and packaging for distribution. The original proposal mentioned *Easton Grows LLC is proposing the cultivation of hemp on the South Park property for commercial production and for the sale of CBD oil and CBD infused products*; however, the discussion was for the sale only of hemp flowers.

VERTICAL INTEGRATION STRATEGY:

Please describe the relationship with Northwest Cultivation, the role of this business in providing quality hemp plants, the retail distribution and sales strategy via Franny's Pharmacy.

SOUTH PARK BUILDING and SECURITY

Please describe the security planned to protect the hemp field from invasion by animals and humans, and the use planned for the outbuilding.

FINANCIAL FEES/INCOME FOR THE TOWN OF EASTON

The original proposal included cost sharing without a defined budget. Please define the expenses expected and the restatement of the profit expected by the Town of Easton to successfully produce hemp during the lease, including building repairs, irrigation, etc. Clarification of the wholesale price expected per pound of Hemp Flowers and the commitment by Griff Conti as stated during the meeting but not referenced in the proposal to a guaranteed buy of the harvested crop.

V: Correspondence: Easton Grows LLC Hemp Cultivation Pilot Program Proposal and applicant written lease

VI: New Business

VII: Adjournment Victor Alfandre made the motion. Jean Stetz-Puchalski 2nd to adjourn meeting at 9:59 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Denise Hebner, Recording Secretary, *Denise Hebner*

Attachments:

Easton Grows South Park Farming Plan

Easton Grows Farming submitted Lease 2021

Ag Com Review of Hemp Cultivation proposal June 16