

**Public Hearing - City Hall, Council Chambers  
December 3, 2024 4:30pm**

**Call To Order:**

Mayor Omerza called the Public Hearing to order at 4:30pm.

PRESENT: Council members A.Forsman, Kess, Debeltz, Campbell, Bisbee and Mayor Omerza

Absent: Council Member Callen

**Purpose:**

The Public Hearing will be to hear public comment regarding, Ordinance 381 and 383 regarding Cannabis Businesses.

- Ordinance 381 – Regulating Cannabis Businesses
- Ordinance 383 – Zoning Cannabis Businesses

Richard Stuart 1460 Jarvi Rd

Stuart thanked the council and staff for all the work that has been done. The ordinances are very thorough and mimic what the county and state have been putting forward. For the registration in the current city ordinance a lot of the language has what the Office of Cannabis Management (OCM) is requiring, so the city should not have to do that also. Stuart discussed the amount of retail registrations allowed, five seems like to many, one is not enough maybe somewhere in the middle with three would be good. Stuart thanked the council and staff again for all their hard work on the ordinances, and encouraged them to reach out with any further questions.

A.Forsman indicated that the council received an email from Dafne Caruso, Forsman read the email.

Caruso discussed in her email that she is in favor of the stricter buffer zones. She indicated that she lives across from Stinky Pete's and has smelled marijuana on more than one occasion. Maintaining the buffer zones of 500-1000 feet of other cannabis establishments makes sense. Caruso also discussed in her email how does Ely want to portray ourselves to the outside world? Do we want visitors and Ely residents to walk through wafts of marijuana? In her hometown in New York City up until marijuana became legal you could walk all of Manhattan and ride the subway without a hint of marijuana smell, during her last trip in 2023 you could not walk anywhere without having to inhale marijuana smoke. She indicated that as a taxpaying resident of Ely, there is absolutely no reason why herself, husband and more importantly her grandchildren have to be exposed to marijuana smoke.

Todd Crego – 36 E White St

Crego stated that he was a summer employee at Stinky Pete's and there is no smell of marijuana there and nothing like that is being sold there.

Bisbee indicated that he spoke with Dafne Caruso and the smell was from the vicinity of Stinky Pete's not directly from there.

Campbell stated that she has read through the bills when this first came out and she has attended hearings at the capital regarding this. This has definitely been a process, and hopefully we have a better understanding of this since it first came out. Campbell stated that she is thankful for Caruso's letter, she cares about the public, and all the tourism and visitors that come to Ely.

Carol Stall 2212 Longstaff Road

Stall talked about her previous addiction and addictions of family and friends and how it can affect your loved ones. Minnesota has changed its laws, and we have to abide by those, but whatever the Ely City Council can do to limit this in our town it would be the best. Stall indicated that drugs have reeked her family and she has lost a child to drugs. She requested that the Council do what they can to limit this in our town.

Margie Nesteroff – 212 Cedar Lane

Nesteroff stated that she agrees with Stall's comments. She had two friends that both passed away from drug overdose. Nesteroff stated that a lot of times these are the entry drugs and then it can progress and become lethal. These drugs are much different than alcohol, the drug epidemic is killing young teenagers and adults. If there is anyway, we can rein this in, she is in favor of it.

Abby Dare – 120 E Conan St

Dare stated that she appreciates all the rules and structure within the ordinances. The highest importance with this is education. Advocating for education and cultural awareness of the topic in general is very important.

Lacey Squier - 417 W Shagawa

Squier stated that she is in favor of potential new products coming into town. Squier stated that she appreciates the other speaker's stories. We can have these businesses in our community and have the economic stimulus they provide and be mindful and find the middle space.

Riley "Ozzy" Reif – 138 E Conan St

Reif appreciates all the work and to bring this topic to our community. It is peoples right to do what they want to do with their body, especially with what is legal within each state. Reif stated that he can understand both sides of the argument. By having these ordinances in place and the education portion of this, he indicated he can support what the city is doing.

Mayor Omerza stated that she appreciates the discussion on the education piece. They do talk about this in the schools. One major part of this is you have to be 21 to purchase and use and there are harsh penalties if you do purchase or consume before you are 21.

## **Adjourn**

Mayor Omerza adjourned the public hearing at 4:55pm without objection.

Casey Velcheff  
Deputy Clerk