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Public hearing on proposed bylaw amendments related to cannabis legalization

A public hearing related to the legalization of cannabis by the federal and provincial governments was held in Council Chambers at City Hall Sept. 24.

The City proposes to amend regulatory bylaws to control retail sales and regulate public consumption in response to the legalization of cannabis. Amendments include changes to the:

- Zoning Bylaw
- Business Licence Bylaw
- Planning Procedures Bylaw
- Public Nuisance Bylaw
- Municipal Smoking Regulation Bylaw
- Parks Control Bylaw

Highlights of proposed bylaw changes:

- Prohibit smoking cannabis in public places.
- Establish a 300-metre buffer between cannabis retail stores.
- Establish a 200-metre buffer between schools and cannabis retail stores. (Dr. Charmaine Enns, medical health officer with Island Health, recommended a 300-metre buffer between commercial areas zoned for cannabis retail outlets and schools. While a 300-metre buffer is the average proposed by communities on Vancouver Island, in Campbell River, this would limit retail opportunities.)
- Require transparent storefront for enhanced security; monitored alarm system; video surveillance.
- Amend references to "marijuana" to "cannabis."
- Clarify wording to permit cannabis retail stores on commercial properties west of Dogwood Street.
- Similar to the review of Provincial Liquor Licence applications, require a fee for the review of referrals from the Province for cannabis-related licenses.
- Establish business license fee of \$2,500.

Council gave first and second reading to the six proposed bylaw amendments at the July 16 meeting. Provincial referral must be initiated before the City is in a position to process any business applications for retail cannabis outlets; and the City of Campbell River will process applications to open cannabis retail stores on a first-come, first-served basis.

Once a prospective business's provincial referral for a non-medical cannabis retail license has been received, the City will contact the business owner to outline additional requirements for a business license that must be submitted prior to Council consideration of the provincial referral.

The province began accepting applications Aug. 10. To date, the City has received no provincial referrals.

Feedback received prior to/during the public hearing:

Council received feedback from four different groups requesting relaxation of the proposed zoning bylaw school and cannabis retail store buffering provisions. Also, public hearing presenters requested that Council consider expanding the permitted location of a cannabis retail store to include Discovery Harbour shopping centre.

Council requested maps to show the effect of a 250-metre buffer between areas zoned for cannabis retail outlets and schools.

Council will give the bylaw third reading and consider adoption at its Oct. 1 meeting.