



MARYLAND
MMCC

Natalie M. LaPrade
Maryland Medical Cannabis Commission

**Medical Cannabis Commission
Meeting Minutes
October 27, 2015
University of Maryland Medical School
Medical Student Teaching Facility
2:00 pm**

Commissioners Present:

William (Chris) Charles
Kevin W. Chen
John Gontrum
Robert Lavin
Deborah Miran
Christina (Tina) Paul
Harry (Buddy) Robshaw
Nancy Rosen-Cohen
Eric Sterling
Allison Taylor
Jon Traunfeld

Commissioners Present by Telephone:

Michael A. Horberg

Staff Present:

Hannah Byron, Executive Director, MMCC
Mary-jo Mather, MMCC
Precious Wells, MMCC
Michael Weinfeld, MMCC
Elizabeth Adams, Assistant Attorney General
Claire Pierson, Assistant Attorney General

Absent:

Dario Broccolino
Shawn P. McNamara

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Davies called the meeting to order at 2:07 pm. He welcomed the attendees, present in the auditorium, and those streaming the meeting. He remarked that he is one, if not the very first, medical doctor to register on the Medical Cannabis Commission's Physician Registry. (Applause) Chair Davies asked each member of the Commission to introduce themselves, and to state their statutory authority to serve on the Commission.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Chairman Davies asked if all Commissioners had had an opportunity to review the Minutes from the previous meeting. There was no further discussion, and he asked for a Motion to Approve the Minutes. It was offered, and appropriately seconded, and the Minutes were approved.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT: Paul Davies

Dr. Davies reported that since our last meeting in July, the Medical Cannabis regulations were promulgated as of September 14th. The Commission worked very hard, and deserve a hard copy of the regulations for their files, which were included in their meeting packets. The also extended his thanks to the Commission staff who have worked with such dedication. Staff worked continuously with RESI on the application design, and the Grower, Processor and Dispensary applications were published on the website on September 28th. The application deadline is November 6. Staff has been working diligently to answer the many questions received from applicants through the dedicated website, to draft new FAQs. The period to ask questions ended on the previous Friday, but applicants are instructed to continue monitoring the website, as additional FAQs may be added. Dr. Davies then turned over the meeting to Hannah Byron for the presentation of her Executive Director's Report.

COMMITTEE CHAIR REPORTS:

Executive Director's Report: Hannah Byron

Hannah Byron thanked those attending, including those streaming the meeting, and noted that the Commission is constantly looking for new meeting options, and welcomes suggestions. She also thanked Chairman Davies and the members of the Commission, and introduced the newest member of the Commission staff, Michael Weinfeld. Michael is a veteran DHMH staff member with over thirty years of health care organization experience whose primary responsibilities will include the budget, finance, compliance and procurement. She reported that he has jumped right in and will be involved in many important initiatives.

Ms. Byron reported that the audience members had also been very busy on their end as well. She reported a very robust FAQ period, in which it was hoped that the Commission had answered most of the questions presented. She strongly suggested that applicants read the statute, the regulations, and FAQs which are all on the website, and wished all applying good luck.

She then stated that she wanted to particularly thank Mary-jo Mather, Precious Wells, and Assistant Attorney General Elizabeth Adams who have all done an excellent job managing the FAQ process, coming immediately on the heels of the drafting and comment period for the regulations, the design of the applications, and then the submission of the applications. She stated that other concurrent priorities included the soft launch of the Physician Registry, and reported that some physicians have already registered. The Commission will be working with physician industry groups, hospitals, and individual physicians to get the message out. The Commission will be collaborating with other partners to get the message out to Physicians, through online educational opportunities, including hospital Grand Rounds.

Ms. Byron reported that the Commission is working with a communications team, Hillman Communications, who will be working on some marketing materials to be offered at physicians' offices for patients and caregivers.

She reported that the Commission participated in a great session with Patients Out of Time, and MDCIA for doctors and others in the medical professions, and thanked the many sponsors who made the event possible. The next task is to complete the training and compliance aspects of the Program. The Commission is working with the Americans for Safe Access, who will be training agents. There are currently two staff positions posted, and she thanked Jon Traunfeld and Tina Paul for their assistance with the job descriptions. She also mentioned an additional open position for a Health Occupations Investigator. These staff positions will involve extensive training before the second stage of the licensure process. Ms. Byron also stated that the Commission is beginning to look at Independent Testing Laboratories, as a number of groups have expressed interest. An ITL registration form and Guidance will be posted after being finalized internally. She finally reported that the contracts with investigative services organizations will be utilized as the Commission moves forward to review the criminal justice information and additional materials provided by applicants.

She concluded her report by stating that the entire Commission has been really busy, as it strives to reach the next milestone, when the applications submissions are complete.

Chairman Davies gave additional thanks to Hannah's team, and added that one of the Commission's goals was to develop organizational policies, and that over the last 6 months, the Commission, with extra efforts by Eric Sterling, had formulated some organizational policies. Dr. Davies then introduced Commissioner Sterling, and invited him to present his report.

Eric Sterling, Policy Committee, Chair

Organizational Policies

Commissioner Sterling summarized the Organizational Policies, which authorizes and spells out how the Commission will function; identifies membership; the number of meetings; participation by members; parliamentary procedures; State law on attendance requirements; responses to the Executive Director for attendance; and telephone attendance at meetings, as necessary. The Policies describe the Standing Committees as Education and Outreach, Executive Committee, Finance and Budget, Policy, and Research. The Charter for each Standing Committee is spelled out. The Policies further identify Officers; and the duties of each individual Standing Committee; their warrant and authority; member communications with the public; conflict of interest in regard to post-Commission service restrictions; ethics and the adoption of the Organizational Policies.

Chair Davies stated that the Commission was open to questions about the policies from the Commissioners attending. Commissioner Chris Charles requested more specificity as to the urgent decisions that the Executive Committee was authorized to make by the Organizational Policies, which were not currently under the authority of another Standing Committee in existence. He asked if the policies could be amended, and stated that he understood the need for haste in making some decisions. Commissioner Sterling responded that without giving the authority to the Executive Committee to make urgent decisions, the Executive Director and Chairman would be “hobbled” in decision-making until the next full Commission meeting. Mr. Charles asked if any others took issue with this, and when no member came forward, went on to express his next concern regarding the creation of “ad hoc” committees, and stated that in his experience with other committees that ad hoc committees are occasionally needed, but once their function has concluded, the Standing Committee(s) are available to take over. He suggested a motion to strike “additional standing or” from the draft Organizational Policies. Chair Davies asked for other input, and receiving none, asked for a Motion to Amend. Allison Taylor asked for clarification. A Motion to Amend the Organizational Policies to strike the suggested language was offered and appropriately seconded. The Motion passed unanimously, and there were no abstaining members. The Amendment as proposed by Commissioner Charles was accepted.

Commissioner Charles then offered that in organizations with trustees, in regard to the responsibilities of an Executive Director, he or she must obtain the approval of other members before entering into any contracts. He asked for comment from other members present. Allison Taylor stated that in her opinion the formalization and execution of contracts are within the purview of the Executive Director’s responsibilities. Commissioner Sterling stated further that in a non-profit organization that might be the case, but as a State organization the Executive Director is already subject to the laws and procurement regulations.

Commissioner Charles then posed a question regarding post-Commission service limitations. He questioned the necessity for inclusion of this clause as the Commission is already subject to State Ethics laws. Mr. Sterling stated that the language was reviewed by the Commission's Assistant Attorney General and approved. Mr. Charles suggested editing the phrase to add "the most current State ethics laws". Mr. Sterling stated that by legal convention, any reference to a law refers to the most current law in force. Chairman Davies asked if others had further questions for Mr. Sterling about the Organizational Policies, and when none were presented, asked for a Motion to Approve the Organizational Policies, which was offered by Commissioner Rosen-Cohen, and seconded by Commissioner Gontrum. The Motion to Approve the Organizational Policies passed unanimously, with no abstentions.

Eric Sterling went on to state that the Commission had received an enormous number of questions about the applications, and that the staff had worked incredibly hard to answer many complicated questions, and demonstrated incredible dedication to this process.

Chairman Davies then request that Commissioner Debby Miran offer her Education Report.

Education Committee: Deborah Miran, Chair

Commissioner Miran reported that the first physician Primer was offered at a facility in Columbia, Maryland, which was excellent. Eric Sterling offered an updated presentation on the Commission; Mary Lynn Mathry offered a presentation from the nurse's point of view, and Dustin Sulak, a practicing physician and researcher, spoke extensively on his clinical experience and offered a broad overview of the endocannabinoid system. Comments from the standing room only audience were very favorable. Ms. Miran states that more of these events are planned in the near future.

Ms. Miran reported that she and Commissioner Sterling had spoken at Grand Rounds at the University of Maryland, with great questions posed by attendees. She stated that three upcoming community hospital talks were to take place in November and early winter. She noted that she was very happy that the Physician Registry is now live. She concluded by stating that the International Research Society's pharmacy and clinical meeting would be taking place in Rockville, Maryland in the coming days.

Chair Davies went on to express his excitement to introduce the speaker for the meeting, Dr. David Casarett. He stated that he is always pleased to have an opportunity to educate Commissioners, but also the general audience as the many aspects of medical cannabis. He provided the extensive list of Dr. Casarett's academic awards, and stated that he is currently a palliative care physician and researcher, a tenured University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine professor, author of over 100 journal articles, and author of three non-fiction books, most recently "Stoned: A Doctor's Case for Medical Cannabis".

Guest Speaker: Dr. David Casarett

Dr. Casarett's presentation focused on individual case histories and experiences with three different patients, and his opportunity to view cannabis as a useful clinical treatment for those with end-stage disease. He answered multiple questions from the audience, and stayed on to autograph his book. Dr. Davies thanked Dr. Casarett for coming to speak on his own time, and at his own expense.

New Business

Chair Davies asked if there was any new business to discuss. Receiving no reply, he asked for a Motion to Adjourn, which was appropriately offered and seconded.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:51 pm.