

**Minutes of the
Topsfield Planning Board
Town Forum
Town Library Meeting Room
February 13, 2018**

Chairman Morrison called the meeting to order at 7:00PM.

Board members present: Chairman Martha Morrison, Jeanine Cunniff, Joseph Geller, Josh Rownd and Steven Hall. Of the Planning Board staff Community Development Coordinator Donna Rich was in attendance.

Visitors: Heidi Fox, Dick Cullinan, Sheryl Knutsen, Louise Rownd, Peter Belisto, Kim Sherwood, Zillie Bhuj, John King, Chris Donovan, Lou Ross Finance Committee member, Board of Selectmen members John Spencer & Dick Gandt, Fire Chief Jen Collins-Brown, Town Administrator Kellie Hebert, Green Meadows Farm representatives Bob Patton, Rob Patton and Chris Zawacki, Tri-Town Council Executive Director Lisa Teichner and Youth and Coalition Coordinator Meredith Shaw, Wendy Waller from Wenham, and Tri-Town Transcript reporter Greg Phipps.

Town Forum: Chairman Morrison opened the forum by introducing the topic of marijuana in the Town of Topsfield, recalling that the citizens of Topsfield voted at the ballots against recreational marijuana in 2016, 57% to 43%. Chairman Morrison explained that because the Town voted against recreational marijuana the Town could ban non-medicinal marijuana by Town Meeting vote. Chairman Morrison's slide presentation (attached) depicts all the facts that are known to date and the impact to the Town. In addition, Chairman Morrison described by-laws that could be proposed at the May 1st Annual Town Meeting that would ban recreational marijuana establishments, in keeping with the character of the Town. Members of the Board expressed their displeasure with lack of guidance, to date, from the Commonwealth regarding this issue, stating that at this point it is easier to place a total ban and have the ability to change if need be later on. Tri-Town Council Executive Director Lisa Teichner and Youth and Coalition Coordinator Meredith Shaw expressed their concern on the effects of marijuana on our youth in Topsfield by reading a statement, which was submitted for the record. Selectman Spencer stated his agreement that the Town should place a ban on recreational marijuana establishments, as was voted on in 2016. Resident Heidi Fox voiced her concern that Topsfield was a "dry" town and now Topsfield has alcohol licenses available. The discussion switched to medicinal marijuana and Green Meadows Farm representatives Rob Patton provided a brief historical background relative to the status of the farm stand located on Asbury Street. Rob read the following statement from his grandmother Joanne Patton:

"First, I would like to apologize, as I have contracted the flu and could not present my remarks in person.

When my late husband, George Patton, retired from the army and returned to the home and land he had been privileged to inherit, he announced at once his intention to create a farm with a mission. He wanted it to grow the healthiest possible produce, and for it to become a community asset. I think the record speaks for itself.

In over 35 years, the mission remains the same. But the family now realizes that we have entered a new era, one that requires not only healthy and responsible farming, but a place that may increase the land's potential to benefit our community and other worthy causes. That is why my family comes to you tonight. My son and grandsons will now speak for all of us.

Thank you.

Joanne Patton”

Bob Patton explained the family philosophy of growing organically and how this principal could be utilized to grow medicinal cannabis, which could benefit veterans, cancer patients, epilepsy, to name a few. Bob also explained that the family project plans to employ veterans, as this is a strong initiative for them. Bob stated that the State licensing process is in progress. They have no intent for a retail operation and he explained that there would be a Host Community Agreement that would need to be put in place. Veterans Agent Dick Cullinan spoke in support of the project, citing the benefits medicinal cannabis has had for veterans with PTSD, phantom pain and suicide. Member Joe Geller reported that there would have to be a Zoning Overlay District with a 2/3's vote at Town Meeting if the project were to be placed on the 2018 Warrant. Other comments stated were relative to public safety issues and the desire for more information.

At 7:57pm Chairman Martha Morrison thanked everyone for attending the Town Forum. Respectfully submitted,

Donna C. Rich

Community Development Coordinator

Per the Open Meeting Law, the documents that were either distributed to the Planning Board before the meeting in a packet, or at the meeting were:

1. Agenda
2. Flyer for Town Forum to be held 2/13/18
3. Received at the meeting: Tri-Town Council letter dated 2/13/18, slide presentation presented and developed by Chairman Morrison, statement from Joanne Patton.

Approved as amended at the April 3, 2018 Planning Board meeting.

Pursuant to the 'Open Meeting Law,' G.L. 39, § 23B, the approval of these minutes by the Committee constitutes a certification of the date, time and place of the meeting, the members present and absent, and the actions taken at the meeting. Any other description of statements made by any person, or the summary of the discussion of any matter, is included for the purpose of context only, and no certification, express or implied, is made by the Committee as to the completeness or accuracy of such statements.
