

CITIZENS COMMENTS
MAY 4, 2021 COUNCIL MEETING
SECOND READING COMMENTS

Kweli Campbell

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I am hoping since the tabling at the last meeting, significant research was done to vote down the ordinance to ban legal sales of marijuana here in Orange. As stated previously, I understand that Cannabis legislation comes with a need for a fair amount of education for most. But, here we are at near the finish line and point blank simply - Orange NJ needs this revenue stream! This is not about whether you agree with the use of Cannabis. This is about whether you agree with Orange receiving rightful benefits and tax dollars associated with sales related to Cannabis – same as you agreed with other drug and alcohol businesses that we see in our community – beer garden, countless liquor stores, pharmacies and so on. May I also add the countless hours spent to ensure social equity and justice related to Cannabis sales by numerous advocates and politicians. To deny Orange, NJ the ability to receive these benefits is a slap in the face to many and puts you on the wrong side of history. In the spirit of representation and not your personal views, please vote for what the people want! A prosperous Orange, NJ.

Christopher Jackson

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Peace, Everyone.

There is an opportunity for Orange to move ahead of other towns that are not interested in the new industry that opened when the majority of Orange voters chose legalized cannabis. We have entrepreneurs lining up to start a business here, and one that has already come and is presenting a fine public image in providing cannabis products to our neighbors who use them.

While there is an unstable majority on the municipal council that opposes cannabis in Orange, there is a growing majority of the public that supports its use for medicinal as well as recreational purposes, and of course, is interested in the tax revenue that accompanies new businesses. The council can take all kinds of helpful actions that help Orange support the wishes of citizens, and our mayor has a position of statewide influence that may bring us advantages - if we set our priorities right. Orange may be uniquely appropriate for cannabis, and we can clear a path that others follow rather than wait to fit someone else's plans to our needs. If we do it here, the mayor can share our success with other similarly-situated towns. Orange is certainly not the only town that needs tax revenue and whose citizens need some rehabilitation following years of negative impact under the prohibition of marijuana and the disproportionate enforcement of such laws.

The mayor has attended local forums that discuss and educate about cannabis, but he has not expressed to us in written form his plan for the growth of cannabis here. There is an opportunity here to unify our municipal government, organize our citizens for a positive purpose, and communicate with businesses in a more intimate way to inform the industry about how we want cannabis to be served here. Fortunately, there appears to be a general desire among cannabis business owners to become a good neighbor and provide more a substantive function in making Orange better than mere tax revenues - social justice and public relevance are also goals.

It is important that the council support the majority in making Orange a place where cannabis is

W city clerk office meetings citizens comments-questions 2021

welcome, or at least be clear why it is not in Orange's interest to do so. The resolution banning cannabis was crafted prematurely, before research, before citizens were surveyed, before the mayor made a presentation to the council about his plans for cannabis. What does the NJ Urban Mayors Association see as the future of cannabis in our state? Are they waiting for guidance from the statewide commission?

I suggest we do something different, something to show we can run our own show. First, what do citizens really think? I created a survey that can be easily distributed to begin the process of making cannabis work here. It is simple and can help municipal entities and interested businesses know what Orange wants. We don't always have to wait for somebody else to tell us what we can do here. We have to lead our own show, write our own associated code, and demand what we want, as we do in every request for proposals we publish.

I have attached a copy of my survey for your review. I shared it with the administration a couple of weeks ago, but so far, I haven't heard even an acknowledgement that my submission was received. There is urgent need for information, urgent need for collaboration, and a hot opportunity to be empowered through the process of matching Orange with cannabis.

Unfortunately, we have years of adversarial postures between the administration and the council, and this is a subject matter that should transcend aversion to collaboration, but it is the mayor who really has the lead and is refusing to take it. It is one thing to talk at a meeting of citizens and entrepreneurs about what they want, and to support their desire for cannabis, but is a different level of leadership when a controversial public issue is taken directly to the council. Maybe he will join the meeting on 5/4. The council is unnecessarily taking the role of the prohibition authority with the weak position of waiting for others to do it, and the mayor is avoiding his role as a leader of the citizens by staying away from discussing it openly with the council. I know that some council members have not attended public forums, but they have been at their meetings, which have been packed with interested citizens.

In order for us to move forward smoothly, we should ditch the ban, conduct a survey to initiate the process of forming a new industry, and begin to work through any of the concerns that arise regarding the new industry in order to make it work for Orange. Courage, clarity, and an honest commitment to serve citizens' wishes are required, and we deserve all 3 from our elected officials on this issue. Let's get it done.

Theresa Borenstein
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We need this dispensary to be open in Orange. It will benefit the residents and our young people through taxes to build a better library. Our children could have more activities to stay off the streets and become better citizens. We have so many buildings being built that don't have to pay taxes which it falls back on the people of Orange. At least some of the taxes paid by them can be used to assist in that burden. No one even publicized the information for the first vote to any Orange resident. We voted for it to be legal. So our vote should be counted in this matter too. When you don't listen to your residents, we will remember this at voting time for YOU.