

## Salem City Council hears about medical marijuana dispensary plan

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Salem City Council on Monday heard presentations from city staff and others about Oregon's new law to establish a medical marijuana dispensary registration system.

The law, House Bill 3460, will begin to take effect in March. Salem and other jurisdictions in Oregon are preparing for the arrival of more medical marijuana clinics.

At a city council work session, Salem City Attorney Dan Atchison said city leaders have choices to make. The city could rely on state rules for medical marijuana dispensaries, or it could adopt local regulations.

If councilors decide tighter controls are needed, the city could adopt new zoning restrictions or a general ban on marijuana dispensaries, Atchison said. A city licensing requirement also could be a potential tool to regulate marijuana dispensaries, he said.

Salem City Councilor Chuck Bennett, who represents Ward 1, said the arrival of one marijuana clinic in his area "lit-up" his email and phone with messages from worried neighbors.

"For a whole bunch of folks I represent, this is a substantial cultural change," Bennett said. Neighbors shouldn't be caught by surprise when an operator of marijuana dispensary plans to open a new location, he said.

In contrast, Salem City Councilor Laura Tesler said the marijuana clinics in her Ward 2 have generated little controversy.

"I have four of them. I haven't heard a peep from anybody," Tesler said.

City staff took questions from councilors and will report back at future meeting. The council made no decisions about drafting new city rules.

Some medical marijuana advocates, however, worry the city will eventually seek an outright ban.

During the public comment period of Monday's council meeting, held before the work session, more than a half dozen people urged the council to allow marijuana dispensaries to flourish.

"Please don't take away my right to a safe medicine," said Jay Kobi Pacey-Krause. He told councilors that medical marijuana controls pain from an old injury, and it has none of the side-effects of conventional painkillers he's tried.

Glenn Kristiansen asserted that patients would resort to the black market if the councilors moved to restrict legal suppliers.

"Lets get our heads out of the sand and make sure those legally entitled to it can get it safely," Kristiansen said.

Chris Oss, a Salem resident, asked the council to not look at medical marijuana "in the old mentality of

Reefer Madness.”

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