Cannabis Control Commission

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

560 Jefferson Boulevard
Warwick, Rhode Island 02886

Cannabis Control Commission

Open Meeting Minutes

DATE:	**Monday, October 20, 2025**
TIME:	**9:30 a.m.**
PLACE:	**Public Utilities Commission** **89 Jefferson Boulevard** **Warwick, RI 02886**
MEMBERS PRESENT:	Chair Kimberly R. Ahern, Esq. Commissioner Robert B. Jacquard, Esq. Commissioner Olayiwola Oduyingbo, Esq.
MEMBERS ABSENT:	None
OTHERS PRESENT:	Michelle Reddish, MS, MPH Administrator, Cannabis Office Mariana Ormonde, Esq., Chief of Legal Services, Cannabis Control Commission Kelsey McQueeney, Chief Implementation Aide Officer, Cannabis Control Commission Carla Aveledo, Esq., Chief of Policy, Cannabis Control Commission Kelly Verte, Chief Financial Officer, Cannabis Control Commission Katelyn Garside, Project Services Coordinator, Cannabis Control Commission Charon Rose, MPA Chief of Public Affairs, Cannabis Control Commission Erica Ferrelli, Chief Regulatory Officer, Cannabis Office Suzanna Skolnik, Esq., Senior Legal Counsel, Cannabis Office

Chairperson Ahern called the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m.

The first item of business was:

Introductory remarks from the Chairperson, which included:

- Welcomed attendees and thanked everyone for accommodating the change in meeting date.

The next item of business was:

Motion to approve the minutes of the Open Session Meeting held on September 12, 2025.

Upon motion made by Commissioner Jacquard and duly seconded by Commissioner Oduyingbo, it was unanimously

VOTED: To approve the minutes of the Open Session Meeting held on September 12, 2025.

The next item of business was:

Review, discussion, and potential vote on the Zone 1 Compassion Center vacancy application status, which included:

- Legal Counsel provided an overview of the background and timeline of the Zone 1 Compassion Center vacancy that has led to this point.
- Explained that Cannabis Office received, thoroughly reviewed, and deemed the application variance request filed by the remaining previously qualified applicant New Leaf Compassion Center as complete and qualified to proceed.

Upon motion made by Chairperson Ahern and duly seconded by Commissioner Oduyingbo, it was unanimously

VOTED: To approve New Leaf Compassion Center's Zone 1 variance request application as complete.

Upon motion made by Chairperson Ahern and duly seconded by Commissioner Jacquard, it was unanimously

VOTED: To approve New Leaf Compassion Center's Zone 1 variance request application to be qualified in accordance with the Commission's regulations, 560-RICR-10-10-1.8(G).

Upon motion made by Chairperson Ahern and duly seconded by Commissioner Oduyingbo, it was unanimously

VOTED: To select New Leaf Compassion Center's as the provisionally approved applicant for the Zone 1 Compassion Center license.

Update on Social Equity Applicant Status Certification process presented by Cannabis Control Commission Chief of Policy, Carla Aveledo, Esq., which included:

- Reviewed the timeline of Social Equity Applicant Status Certification (SEASC) process up to this point.
- Noted that there were 220 interest forms submitted and 94 completed applications submitted.
- Provided a high-level overview of the review process for certification and next steps, to include a ten-day statutory alternative evidence period.
- Explained that there will be an additional form available and process allowing for interest holder change requests following certification.

Following the presentation, Chairperson Ahern provided commentary, which included:

- Highlighted the Adult Use Cannabis Retail License application launch as a milestone that, alongside the Social Equity Applicant Status Certification Portal, reflects the Commission's commitment to equity, transparency, accountability, and public health.

The next item of business was:

Review, discussion, and potential vote on the Adult-Use retail application process, including recent public feedback with respect to final zoning requirements, which included:

- Chair Ahern noted that there was public feedback and factors outside of the Commission's control that have impacted internal timelines for the license application process.
- Proposed that applicants will have sixty (60) additional days after the application portal closes to demonstrate final zoning approval from the local municipality in which the proposed cannabis establishment is located.
- Noted that there is no intention on re-opening or changing the current regulations with respect to the issue of zoning.
- Provided a proposed timeline for the application process the first two quarters of 2026, which include the application review process, final zoning approval confirmation for submitted applications and a proposed random selection process in Spring 2026.
- Chair Ahern emphasized that the Commission and Cannabis Office reserve the right to calendar the random selection process at a different time, depending on a number of external factors.
- Commissioner Jacquard thanked those who provided public comment, and also indicated that there are applicants who are not having issues or require additional time for zoning approval.
- Commissioner Jacquard noted that adequate financing is a major factor in this issue.
- Commissioner Jacquard further noted that the Commission's regulations have been public for some time and that the public and potential applicants were on

notice regarding zoning requirements and that there would not be extensions in the application process.

- Chair Ahern highlighted that there are municipalities that have been extremely proactive with respect to zoning issues for cannabis establishments, and other municipalities that have been less active, which can impact prospective applicants.
- Chair Ahern noted that the General Assembly through the Rhode Island Cannabis Act mandated that the Commission to work closely with social equity applicants with respect to assistance with financing through the Social Equity Program and Fund.
- Chair Ahern highlighted upcoming events to be held by the Commission and Cannabis Office, including an access to banking panel for prospective applicants.

Upon motion made by Chairperson Ahern and duly seconded by Commissioner Oduyingbo,

Chair Ahern and Commissioner Oduyingbo VOTED to allow the Cannabis Office and staff to proceed with the Adult-Use retail application process in accordance with the proposed timeline in Q1 and Q2 of 2026 as was presented at the meeting.

Commissioner Jacquard VOTED against the motion.

The next item of business was:

Public Comment

8 people gave public comment, which included:

- Expressed disappointment on not being able to provide public comment prior to the Commission voting on issues listed on the agenda.
- Recommended that final zoning approval timeline for proposed cannabis establishments of Social Equity applicants be extended for sixty days, but not for all applicants.
- Noted that real estate is one of the largest barriers in terms of expenses for applicants, and the frequency or infrequency of municipal zoning meetings can create issues for timely zoning approval.
- Suggested potentially holding a separate random selection process for Social Equity applicants.
- Opposed time extensions to retail application period and random selection process.
- Expressed that many applicants have already expended money and effort into obtaining timely zoning approvals to comply with original application deadline.

- Commended the Commission's vote regarding the proposed 2026 timeline and extending the deadline for final zoning approvals that will make the industry more accessible to a larger pool of applicants.
- Noted that there are a lot of applicants who don't have the capital to obtain zoning approval in advance of the application period, but who would still be great cannabis establishment operators if selected.
- Appreciated the thoughtful consideration of these issues by the Commission.
- Expressed that there are teams of applicants who are ready to go with business plans and other application documentation and that it would be a shame if final zoning approval requirements or denial precluded them from an opportunity at licensure.

The next item of business was:

Adjournment:

Upon motion made by Chairperson Ahern and duly seconded by Commissioner Oduyingbo, it was unanimously

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting at 10:39 a.m.

Next Meeting Date: **To be announced.**