

Council considers approving cannabis production on local agricultural lands

Written By ALYSSA PARKHILL

With the legalization of marijuana in Canada passing in October of last year, cities and towns across the country have been looking at different ways to produce, process and research benefits of cannabis.

Back in April, Caledon council discussed a proposed zoning bylaw amendment that would permit cannabis production facilities within the town.

Town Staff member Stephanie McVittie presented to council this past Tuesday (Dec. 3), discussing a zoning bylaw amendment regarding agricultural and commercial use related to production of cannabis, which includes producing, processing, testing and researching.

Currently, the Town of Caledon uses an application process to obtain a license to produce and process cannabis through Health Canada. Those who choose to apply must go through an extensive process to make sure the cannabis production facility complies with the Town's requirements.

"We looked at growing, producing, processing etc. on cannabis uses on agricultural lands, and this is in relation to a staff report that was brought earlier this year," Mr. McVittie said.

He added, "The purpose of that was to amend the Town's zoning bylaw to permit and regulate cannabis production facilities, instead of medical marijuana facilities. Through that council meeting, a recommendation was made through the motion by council to ask staff to look at the permissions within agricultural lands from both an official plan perspective and from the zoning perspective," explains McVittie in her presentation.

Staff concluded that cannabis production and growth on agricultural lands may be considered within the existing land use permissions, but as the permissions permits the sale of cannabis, an amendment is needed to eliminate the retail sale of cannabis.

Mayor Thompson raised concerns regarding the production of the cannabis, through cbd oil, which is known as a medical supplement for mental disorders and pain.

"It will be an agricultural crop, and it needs to be rotated through a crop rotation. So, here's the challenge, a lot of farms in this area, isn't just owned by the farmer, there's a lot of rented land as well. So, we can't be going and putting amendments on people's rented land to be able to grow this as a crop. It'll be very similar to canola production, it's an oil seed," explains Mayor Thompson.

He added, "the biggest issue that they're having with the seed, is it's a little sticky. So, the storage is going to be another issue. But it's designed mainly for cbd oil, you can't get a high off it, it's very different from the cannabis, it's a different animal all together."

Counsellor Kiernan requested clarification on whether the production of cannabis will have no THC (Tetrahydrocannabinol) which is a principal in cannabis that gives the 'high' effect, like cbd oil, or if the production will be of cannabis in itself, which was confirmed by McVittie, that the production will be for recreational use as well as medicinal.

She also asked Staff on how the Town can deal with the negative impacts on the production of cannabis on agricultural lands such as light, odor and smell for those surrounding the property.

"There are some studies that can be done, in order to support applications. So, if we go the route of site-specific bylaw amendment or anything indoor, then they may have to submit studies that would prove that those items are not going to negatively impact the neighbour. In addition, there is a public consultation process that the neighbours can come out and speak to it as well," responded

McVittie.

Outdoor production facilities are permitted as long as they reach 50 or 150 metre setbacks.

Security was another concern raised by Coun. Kiernan in regards to theft and crime. These crops become more accessible people to steal and sell cannabis, if security does not become a factor of the amendment.

Staff concluded with council that they do require a license from those who produce cannabis, and through that licensing process they would have to provide proof of security and those who do obtain the license will ensure the Town that they have the proper security measures. The licensing process goes through other levels of government.

Council will continue to work with Staff on researching confirming all factors that have been taken into consideration on the production of cannabis on agricultural lands before they make a final decision.

For more information, please visit caledon.ca.