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## Georgetown selectmen approve Greenbridge cannabis facility host agreement

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Posted Oct 17, 2017 at 4:13 PM

Updated Oct 17, 2017 at 4:32 PM

After weeks of back-and-forth and delays, the Georgetown Board of Selectmen Monday night approved a host agreement with Greenbridge Health, a medical cannabis company looking to set up a cannabis growing facility on Carleton Drive.

The board was set to vote on it a couple weeks ago, but the agreement was held up by Healthy Pharms - the medical marijuana business already operating in town - regarding competition and decreased payments to the town. Greenbridge agreed to make up that loss of revenue.

In the agreement, Greenbridge agrees to pay the town \$200,000 or 1 percent of wholesale value of medical marijuana produced at the facility in each year of operation, up to \$300,000.

If that 1 percent of wholesale value is more than \$300,000, the company will make an additional payment equal to .5 percent of the wholesale value.

The agreement will last for five years, and then it will have to be renegotiated and approved again.

While the agreement calls for Greenbridge to give that money, anything beyond what the town documents as impact cost (increased police overtime, fire inspections, etc.) will count as a donation.

The statute requires that a town document its expenses related to a cannabis business once that business is operational anyway. So, if the town spends \$10,000 in that first year for costs related to Greenbridge, the remaining \$190,000 will count as a donation. And all of the money can be spent by the Board of Selectmen as the board sees fit.

### **'We still want the money'**

Selectman Steve Sadler spoke out against that clause because the board was still pending decision on a letter of non-opposition for Greenbridge.

But state statute dictates that a board not solicit a business if that business has a pending outcome with that board.

"So there's a pending outcome, a vote on the letter of non-opposition," Sadler noted. "So today we're saying in order for you to do that, if the impact fees are zero, we still want the money. And what we're saying is that in order for you to get the letter of non-opposition, you have to agree to this host agreement. To me, that's not ethical."

Town Attorney Jonathan Eichman replied that the statute applies to individuals on the board, not the whole board itself. And no individual member on the Board of Selectmen is soliciting Greenbridge on his own behalf.

Sadler wasn't moved, though.

"What we're saying is we will give you a letter of non-opposition, if you give us a donation," Sadler said. "In my mind, that's unethical."

### **The Greenbridge offer**

But Selectman Doug Dawes took issue with Sadler's analysis.

"First of all, we didn't go to Greenbridge requesting anything," Dawes responded. "Mike [Farrell, town administrator] and I were asked to speak with Greenbridge because we were told that we needed to do a host agreement. Greenbridge offered us - we didn't go to them and say we want \$200,000, or \$300,000 or a million

dollars or anything.

“We just went in and Greenbridge said, ‘Here’s what we will donate to the community,’ so I don’t see that as the board or anybody soliciting anybody,” Dawes continued. “If anything, Greenbridge made an offer to us because they wanted to do business in the community and help the community, to be a good partner. But I don’t see where that constitutes soliciting.”

Selectman Gary Fowler, who was unable to attend in person but participated remotely, said he was frustrated by the constant changes in the agreement, including the addition of that donation clause at the last minute, but Fowler agreed with Dawes’ assessment about the agreement not being a solicitation by the board.

The board voted 4-1 to approve the host agreement, with Sadler as the “no” vote.

The board then voted 4-1 in favor of that letter of non-opposition - with Sadler being the only “no” again - clearing the way for Greenbridge to move through the planning and permitting process. If all goes well for Greenbridge, the company expects to begin operations in late-2018.