

Shelburne resident upset over proposed development of marijuana production site

Written By **MIKE PICKFORD**

A Shelburne resident is up in arms after learning that a medicinal marijuana production facility could soon be constructed behind her home, while the investor involved in the project claims her worries over potential objectionable odors emanating from the site are unfounded.

Karen Cole has lived in her property on Franklyn Street on the south end of town for four years. She is proud of her home and, like most during the lovely summer months, says she enjoys spending time on her back deck, drinking in the beautiful view beyond. That may be about to change.

It was initially reported in the Shelburne Free Press on July 26 that Council had received a site plan application for construction of a 49,900 sq. ft. cannabis production facility at 144 Luxton Way, south of Franklyn. It was incorrectly stated that construction for the facility would begin in the fall. It was this story, a brief of some 80 words at the beginning of a full council report, that sparked Ms. Cole into action.

‘I am not happy about this particular application. I think more work needs to be done, more research needs to be done and Shelburne council needs to think carefully before jumping into an agreement to bring a business like this to town,’ Ms. Cole told the Free Press. ‘My main concern is regarding the odor. We all know marijuana has a strong smell. I’m concerned about the close proximity this building will have to residential homes, a couple of nursing homes, a children’s nursery, a school and a playground.’

When contacted by the Free Press, Mono-based businessman Brandon Rosen sought to clear the air, confirming this new facility would not emit any odors once it’s up and running.

‘It’s a completely closed facility. It is not going to be a typical greenhouse where the cannabis will be exposed to open air. Our facility is completely indoors and the grow rooms will be rooms within the building,’ Mr. Rosen said. ‘We’re going to be putting several measures in place to mitigate any potential odor.’

Mr. Rosen noted the air pressure inside the grow rooms will be adjusted to such a point that, when the doors open and close, all of the air will stay inside of the grow rooms instead of seeping out into the facility. He noted the entire building would be fitted with an industrial size filtration system, ensuring that any air that does reach the surface won’t contain any traces of, or have a smell resembling that of marijuana.

‘Any air that gets out of the building will be filtered through charcoal and HEPA air filters, so they will clean the air before it goes out into the atmosphere,’ Mr. Rosen added.

Still, Ms. Cole was unsure, pointed to numerous reported incidents at marijuana production facilities in St. Catharines and Guelph in Ontario and Burnaby, Langley Township, Maple Ridge and Surrey in B.C. as examples of what can happen if these sites are approved. In a letter submitted to Shelburne Council, Ms. Cole said these communities have noted a frequent strong skunk odor emanating from these greenhouse operations, which negatively affect property values and the quality of life for residents enjoying their homes and backyards.

She pointed to a sub-section under an existing zoning town bylaw as reason enough to deny the application for this proposed development.

‘I don’t understand how we’ve even got this far. Under Shelburne bylaw 38-2007, section 3.14, which reads ‘no use shall be permitted which, from its nature or the materials used therein, creates or is liable to create, by reason or destructive gas or fumes, dust, objectionable odor’,’ Ms. Cole said, ‘that right there is reason enough. The Town should have already said no to this. We have a facility that is liable to project an objectionable odor. I’m sorry, but this case should be closed.’

Mr. Rosen said he has communicated with Ms. Cole in an attempt to reassure her she won’t face any issues with odor emanating from the site.

‘There will be zero impact on the surrounding area. We have made every possible overture to the township, knowing full well we’re backing onto a residential development and that we’re fairly close to Shelburne town centre. We would do everything we can to mitigate any exposure to the surrounding area,’ Mr. Rosen said. ‘We just want to be good corporate citizens and be a good member of this community. I live in the country, so I understand. If there was going to be a bad odor near my home, I’d be concerned too, but I cannot stress enough that will absolutely not be the case here.’

Mr. Rosen hopes construction on the facility can get under way sometime in the fall. With the initial investment in this facility breaching the \$20-million mark, he said the organization is keen to ensure its keeping as close to its initial project timeline as possible. Once it’s up and running, Mr. Rosen says, this facility will create between 30 and 50 jobs in the community.

‘At the end of the day, I have nothing to hide. I’m very mindful of the fact that cannabis is new, people still get a little iffy when it’s

mentioned. I find that people don't really know how things work and immediately think worse-case scenario," Mr. Rosen said. "As far as impacts on Shelburne, I only foresee this project being a positive for the local community."

Still, Ms. Cole is not convinced. She hopes to have an opportunity to address council, to air her concerns and grievances with the potential development. She claims she is not alone. Having informed her neighbours of the project, she says multiple people in the community are ready to stand against this development. She is considering putting a petition together so that council is fully aware of the public's position regarding this project.

"After the debacle surrounding Fiddle Park, I don't trust this council to simply do the right thing. That's why I want to make sure they're doing their research and properly looking into this application," Ms. Cole said. "They can't just move forward and approve this without knowing all the important facts."

In the end, should she ultimately be unsuccessful in her attempts to stop construction, Ms. Cole says she may be forced to reconsider her long-term future at her current home.

"I would have to consider moving if this were to be approved," Ms. Cole said. "I have spent a lot of money, time and effort on my home. It would break my heart to know the town didn't do things properly, didn't listen to citizens and pass this through just to get a property on that piece of land."

She concluded, "At the end of the day, I just don't believe this is the right thing for the town of Shelburne."

According to Shelburne's town planner, Steve Wever, the application for the medicinal marijuana facility is currently being reviewed by staff and will be brought back to council for consideration, with a recommendation attached, at a later date.