

**Cannabis Control Authority  
Board of Directors Meeting**

**MINUTES**

**March 20, 2024**

**1:00-3:00 PM**

**Virginia Workers' Compensation Commission  
Commissioner's Conference Room (Basement)  
333 E. Franklin Street / Richmond, VA 23219**

MEMBERS PRESENT: John Keohane, Chair  
Neil Amin, Vice Chair  
Bette Brand  
Michael J. Massie

MEMBERS REMOTE: Anthony Williams

LEGAL COUNSEL: James Flaherty, Office of the Attorney General

PRESENTERS: Jered Benoit, Cannabis Control Authority  
Brianna Bonat, Cannabis Control Authority  
Isaac Wright, Cannabis Control Authority  
Jake Shuford, Cannabis Control Authority  
Wendy Hupp, Cannabis Control Authority

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Keohane called the meeting to order at 1:01 PM.

**2. DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM**

Mr. Keohane determined the Board had a quorum given that four board members were present in person. Mr. Williams participated remotely from his principal residence, which is more than 60 miles from the meeting location.

**3. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

Upon motion by Ms. Brand and duly seconded by Mr. Amin, the members voted to approve the meeting's agenda.

**4. APPROVAL OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING'S MINUTES**

Upon motion by Ms. Brand and duly seconded by Mr. Amin, the members voted to approve

the draft minutes from the January 31, 2024, Board meeting.

**5. CCA NEW STAFF INTRODUCTIONS**

Mr. Benoit introduced the CCA's newest staff members, Emmy Cohen and Alexia Taylor, who began work in March as Medical Cannabis Program (MCP) Associates.

**6. SAFE DRIVING CAMPAIGN UPDATE**

Ms. Bonat updated the Board on the CCA's Safe Driving Campaign. She reported on the campaign's radio and TV public service announcements (PSAs) that began in October 2023 and will run through September 2024. An additional three PSAs will broadcast across the State of Virginia within the next few months. Ms. Bonat noted that the campaign has had more than 30 million views.

The Board then viewed the three additional campaign PSAs:

"House Party" - [https://youtu.be/M7tQcJWnR00?si=QnYf-ErmfAA\\_09Z6](https://youtu.be/M7tQcJWnR00?si=QnYf-ErmfAA_09Z6)

"No Matter the Name" - <https://youtu.be/tAoV6kQq-zY?si=5hgamWeB3SqcJep->

"College Farewell" - <https://youtu.be/H1mI0ffa1fU?si=WGEuB-MK6TTfYeFI>

Ms. Bonat also updated the Board on the Safe Driving digital marketing campaign that began in February 2024. The digital marketing campaign is featured on Meta (Facebook and Instagram), streaming video, digital-out-of-home (e.g., billboards, gas station screens), and YouTube.

Lastly, she updated the Board on the Safe Driving Campaign's outreach to partners, including state agencies, safe driving organizations, cannabis stakeholders, and colleges and universities. Forging partnerships is an important means of amplifying the CCA's safe driving messaging.

The CCA asked partners to participate in the Safe Driving Campaign by using the Partner Toolkit available on the CCA website; it is free to download and available in English and Spanish. The Toolkit includes a series of social media posts, web banners, and posters and banners. She added that the Toolkit has received positive feedback from partners.

**7. MEDICAL CANNABIS PROGRAM UPDATE**

Mr. Wright provided updates on the MCP. He presented Fiscal Year 2024 (FY 2024) Prescription Management Program data, including the number of dispensations and unique patients. He highlighted FY 2024 data from the Medical Cannabis Portal (Portal), which reflects the number of current written certifications. He explained that the number of registrations continues to decline because registration to participate in the program is no longer required. Mr. Wright noted that improvements to the Portal to improve user satisfaction are ongoing.

Mr. Wright provided information on licensing, including product registrations, license renewals, and application management. He stated that the MCP team can process product registrations and license renewals within an average of 24-48 hours. Development of the online payment system structure is still in process.

He discussed data from HelpSpot, too, the CCA's new help desk software that provides data on customer service response time and issue resolution. Mr. Wright noted that data indicates MCP staff is very responsive to patient and practitioner needs and other public inquiries. Mr. Wright also presented data on the Program's website visits.

Lastly, Mr. Wright provided an update on the Health Service Area 1 Notice of Applications (NOA) process, including the timeline. He stated that frequently asked questions (FAQs) have been added to the NOA website and additional FAQs will be added as questions are received. All questions concerning the NOA process should be sent to [applications@cca.virginia.gov](mailto:applications@cca.virginia.gov).

#### **8. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

Mr. Shuford briefly described cannabis-related legislation that the General Assembly adopted in the session that concluded earlier in March, including separate measures that would create an adult-use retail market, modify certain technical aspects of the medical cannabis program, and provide additional legal protections. He noted Governor Youngkin has until April 8<sup>th</sup> to sign the legislation into law, allow it to become law unsigned, amend the bill, or veto it.

#### **9. BUDGET AND FINANCE UPDATE**

Ms. Hupp reported that current CCA expenditures total \$2.4 million out of the \$5.3 million budget. She noted that expenditures will increase as the CCA moves through the fiscal year due to the recent additions of staff and ongoing recruitments. She reported the CCA completed 10 fiscal impact statements in February related to legislation in the General Assembly.

#### **10. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

Mr. Keohane invited comments from the public.

Darrell Menafee, Menafee Consulting Group, thanked the CCA for doing great work.

Jack Page, Dharma Pharmaceuticals, commended the Board and CCA staff for the successful transition of the MCP.

JM Pedini, Director of the National Organization of the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML),

and the Executive Director of Virginia NORML, also thanked the MCP staff for their work. They added that NORML has received significantly fewer calls seeking help and information from MCP patients since the program transitioned to the CCA.

Jack Howard, Virginia Harvest Partners, requested the CCA avoid allowing one company to control 60 percent of the medical cannabis licenses in the Commonwealth, as it considers applications for HSA 1.

Tyler Gambill, CPA and past president and founder of The Home Growers Club of Virginia, proposed an independent framework of regulators and inspectors in lieu of the CCA employing staff in this area.

William Hill, New Hill Farmer Group, thanked the CCA for doing a great job. He added that, as a disabled veteran, he is pleased to see that the proposed adult-use legislation provides for veterans to be considered in the licensing process.

#### **11. ADJOURNMENT**

The Board adjourned at 1:56 PM.