

CRC updates license approvals; 60 retail sites now open

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

TRENTON — A total of 60 cannabis retail sites were open statewide.

At a meeting Oct. 19 of the state Cannabis Regulatory Commission, Executive Director Jeff Brown said the CRC has issued over 1,250 conditional licenses, approved 157 conversions from conditional to annual licenses, approved 112 annual licenses and 60 expanded alternative care center licenses.

"In total, there are over 300 operating licenses issued or awarded at this time

in New Jersey," Brown said.

Of 2,276 applications received, 1,588 have been approved with 137 applications under review in the Office of Licensing with 348 applications pending resubmission following correcting an error or missing information. A total of 150 applications are under review in the Office of Compliance and Investigations. CRC commissioners approved 40 new conditional licenses, 52 conditional to annual conversions, 20 annual licenses and renewed the annual licenses of two testing laboratories.

CRC Chairwoman Dianna Houenou reported 98

businesses were granted extensions in July through September with a total of 643 conditional license extensions granted this year. She said the top reasons for requesting extensions were municipal approval delays, lack of or delay with site control and funding issues.

Some awardees have failed to pay fees within a time limit.

"There are several businesses that have been awarded an annual license about a year ago and they are now coming up on their one-year deadline to become operational," Houenou said. The CRC's "Cannabis

Safe-Use Campaign will provide unbiased, non-judgmental, science-based information to the public in both English and Spanish. Commissioner Charles Barker said the message is cannabis is safe for adults but not all adults, that its use can impair driving, it's use should be approached carefully, and product should be bought from licensed dispensaries to ensure safety.

He said the target audience for the campaign is tweens, teens and their par-

ents, pregnant and nursing individuals, drivers, inexperienced cannabis users as well as regular cannabis users.

Houenou said the public comment for allowing edible cannabis products is open until Dec. 15. A link to submit comments is on the CRC website: nj.gov/cannabis.

Applications are open for social equity businesses to apply for wholesale, distributor, and delivery service licenses. As of Dec. 27, applications will be accepted

for the new licenses for diversely-owned businesses, she said.

Beginning on March 27, all other applicants can submit applications for those licenses, Houenou said.

She said the CRC currently has many applications in inactive status sitting in the application portal unable to move through the approval process because the businesses are not responding to commission staff when they reach out to fix deficiencies in their applications.

Concerts

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since 2019. Its 2023 budget was \$1.3 million.

Rattigan said the utility's spending year to date was \$713,000.

The utility, just after the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic, was at risk of losing almost \$276,000 due to previous promoter agreements and a lack of ticket sales, specifically for the summer concert series, she said. Rattigan said the city was able to renegotiate the agreements with concert promoters, which helped decrease the loss.

The city lost \$89,000 that year instead of the anticipated \$276,000, she said.

"For 2022 and 2023, I changed the format of how we produce the concerts to a venue rental with the promoter sharing in the costs of advertising and ticket sales," she said. "Since then, we've been in the positive and the concerts have begun to rebuild in attendance."

She said the change allowed her to cut the budget for event and performance costs from \$400,000 to \$216,000 in 2022 and down to \$200,000 in 2023.

Based on financial reports, since 2014, the concerts have been in the negative financially except in 2022 and 2023.

Mayor Zack Mullock said the city lost \$110,000 on concerts in 2014, \$153,000 in 2015, \$186,000 in 2016, \$156,000 in 2017, \$170,000 in 2018, \$178,000 in 2019, \$111,000 in 2020, \$101,000 in 2021, but had positive gains of \$26,000 in 2022 and \$79,000 in 2023.

Rattigan said in 2019 and 2020, the tourism utility budgeted \$400,000 for event and performer costs but just \$200,000 in 2022 and 2023.

She said she was encouraged to try to bring different entertainment to the city, in the case of Capestock outdoor performances on the beachside deck of Convention Hall. The genre of music was similar to bands booked for the summer concert series, Rattigan said.

"I can tell you from experience that most new events take a few years to develop and grow," she said. "The Convention Hall staff and I are proud to say that Capestock went from approximately \$14,000 in ticket sales in 2022 to \$22,500 in ticket sales in 2023, with less expenses and even more positive feedback from the public."

The second year of Capestock was significantly more successful than the first year, Rattigan said.

She said the tourism utility has not been over budget since 2019. Events include free Rotary Park concerts, parades and beach concerts that cost the city thousands of dollars and produce no revenue.

Convention Hall received a \$265,000 shuttered venue grant from the federal government due to the COVID pandemic.

"Just recently, we received a local recreational improvement grant of \$70,000 for a temporary floor inside Convention Hall for roller skating and pickleball," Rattigan said. "For anyone that doesn't know, roller skating severely damages the floor in Convention Hall every year, requiring us to shut down and refinish the floor after each season."

Councilman Mike Yeager asked if the city would hold Capestock again. Rattigan said she is recommending Capestock should continue but she was open to feedback from the city manager and council.

Councilwoman Maureen

McDade said all businesses have "loss leaders, an investment in being able

to attract visitors and people who live here to have some enjoyment."

TIDES: Oct. 25-Nov. 1, 2023

| DATE | HIGH | | LOW | |
|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | A.M. | P.M. | A.M. | P.M. |
| 25 | 5:38 | 5:56 | 11:28 | |
| 26 | 6:30 | 6:49 | 12:00 | 12:26 |
| 27 | 7:19 | 7:39 | 12:47 | 1:20 |
| 28 | 8:05 | 8:26 | 1:33 | 2:11 |
| 29 | 8:50 | 9:13 | 2:17 | 3:01 |
| 30 | 9:34 | 10:00 | 3:00 | 3:50 |
| 31 | 10:18 | 10:47 | 3:44 | 4:40 |
| 1 | 11:04 | 11:37 | 4:29 | 5:31 |

MOON PHASES

Full moon, Oct. 28 • last quarter, Nov. 5

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