

FEATURED

Chippewa Valley board urges townships to prohibit marijuana establishments

- By Nicole Tuttle For Digital First Media – The Macomb Daily



Ron Roberts

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHIPPEWA VALLEY SCHOOLS



Bags of marijuana sit on shelves in a building at the Los Suenos Farms facility in Avondale, Colorado, on Feb. 25, 2016. Chippewa Valley officials sent a letter to officials in Macomb and Clinton townships advocating they reject marijuana sales in their communities.

Bloomberg photo by Matthew Staver.

While a majority of Michigan voters last November expressed overwhelmingly they are in favor of pot, don't count the Chippewa Valley Schools Board of Education among them.

Officials sent a targeted anti-marijuana establishment message to elected officials in Clinton and Macomb townships at a meeting Jan. 14.

The board unanimously approved a resolution opposing commercialized marijuana sales, both medical and recreational, in both townships. The resolution further indicated the district's board requested elected leaders to prohibit commercialized marijuana businesses in their jurisdictions.

"The Chippewa Valley Coalition for Youth and Families, our Chippewa Valley Schools administration and the 22 superintendents of Macomb County schools ask the board of education to join in their request that the communities of Clinton and Macomb township opt out of the commercial sales, sales of marijuana, recognizing the potential harmful effects it has on our youth, their academic success and their future potential," Superintendent Ron Roberts said.

A law passed on Nov. 6 in Michigan allows state residents ages 21 and older to possess up to 2.5 ounces of marijuana, as well as grow up to 12 marijuana plants and up to 10 ounces of marijuana, with any amount greater than 2.5 ounces stored under lock and key, in their residences. The Michigan Regulation and Taxation of Marijuana Act permits municipalities to completely prohibit or limit the number of marijuana establishments within their boundaries.

The resolution contains data indicating that permitted commercial marijuana enterprises in other states and Washington, D.C. over the past month indicated that use of marijuana has risen above the national average among youth ages 12 to 17. The resolution also expressed the district's concern that permitting commercial marijuana businesses in a community could result in increased youth access.

Josh Hovey, a spokesperson for the newly-formed Cannabis Industry Association of Michigan, said on Jan. 15 he believes the district's resolution was "well intentioned" but disputed the accuracy of the data it contained.

"No one on either side of the issue wants to see more kids consuming marijuana," Hovey said. "You are either a medical marijuana patient or 21 and older. That is why the law was written that way. It is important that parents and teachers have conversations with kids to make sure they know how it can impact brain development and that is why it is critical, like with alcohol, that kids aren't consuming."

Roberts said that Macomb Township had already approved an ordinance prohibiting marijuana establishments, but that he did not know a date on which Clinton Township would address the issue.

Clinton Township Clerk Kim Meltzer said on Jan. 15 that presently she doesn't know when the issue will be placed on the township board's agenda. The Macomb Township Board of Trustees unanimously approved a township ordinance prohibiting marijuana establishments on Dec. 19, 2018. Many other communities around Michigan have done the same although in some cases the bans have been characterized as temporary restrictions enacted until state rules and regulations are firmed up in the wake of the November legalization vote.

Macomb County Sheriff Anthony Wickersham wrote in a letter to the Macomb Township board that it was his opinion officials should exercise their right to prohibit the establishment or operation of marijuana establishments in the township.

"As I have spoken many times regarding the opioid crisis, specifically the challenges our office sees on a continuous basis regarding drug use, I feel this is the appropriate action to take regarding any marijuana facility in Macomb Township," Supervisor Janet Dunn read from Wickersham's letter.