

# **Alabama Medical Cannabis Commission Meeting**

## **Minutes**

**March 10, 2022**

The Alabama Medical Cannabis Commission met on March 10, 2022, in the RSA Dexter Conference Room. The meeting was called to order by Vice-Chairman Rex Vaughn at 1:03 P.M.

Mr. Daniel Autrey led the invocation. The roll was taken with a quorum present. Commission members present for the meeting were Dr. Steven Stokes, Mr. Rex Vaughn, Dr. Sam Blakemore, Mr. Dwight Gamble, Dr. Angela Martin, Dr. Eric Jensen, Ms. Loree Skelton, Judge Charles Price, Ms. Taylor Hatchett, Mr. James Harwell, Dr. Jerzy P. Szaflarski, Mr. Bryan Taylor, and Special Agent Dion Robinson. Members absent from the meeting were Dr. William Saliski.

Vice-Chairman Vaughn presented the minutes from the January 13, 2022, commission meeting. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Mr. Gamble, seconded by Ms. Skelton, and received unanimous approval by the Commission.

Vice-Chairman Vaughn then moved into the committee reports portion of the meeting by calling on Mr. Mark Jackson (Executive Director of the Alabama Medical Association) to provide an update for the Physicians' Committee. Mr. Jackson shared an outline detailing the future medical cannabis physician certification course. Mr. Jackson explained that one hour of the course would be devoted to reviewing the legal aspects of the rules and regulations and the additional three hours would cover core clinical education. He explained that the main components covered in the core clinical section would include information on the endocannabinoid system, medically important chemicals from cannabis and their interactions with human systems, common illness that can be treated with medical cannabis, risk of use, pediatric considerations, routes of administration, and myths versus facts. Upon the completion of the course, physicians would be required to take and pass a post-course exam in order to be certified. Mr. Jackson also noted that additional elective courses would be created in collaboration with Dr. Szaflarski for continued educational purposes and to provide insight into specific conditions and treatments.

Upon completion of Mr. Jackson's remarks, Mr. Matt Hart (Board of Medical Examiners) gave an update on the proposed physician rules that include provisions on the registration and training required for physicians to certify or recommend patients for the use of medical cannabis. He explained that the Board of Medical Examiners have reviewed and evaluated the public comments submitted and is set to make a determination and final certification of the rules at their March meeting.

Dr. Szaflarski then presented data from Greenwich Biosciences, the University of Alabama Birmingham, and the Alabama Medical Association on medical providers knowledge and interest in medical cannabis. Dr. Szaflarski covered data points including opinions on legalization, stigma, support for legislation by type of cannabis product and condition, knowledge and knowledge needs, and professional/demographic characteristics.

Vice-Chairman Vaughn provided an update for the Agricultural Committee. He informed the Commission of ongoing conversations between Mississippi's cannabis regulators and the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) concerning providing power utilities to the cannabis industry. Mr. Vaughn explained that this could present an issue for regions of Alabama and that the Commission would continue to follow the situation.

Dr. Jensen provided a report on behalf of the Processors Committee. He notified members that representatives from the Ohio Department of Commerce, Medical Marijuana Control Program, will give a presentation surrounding cannabis processing, product packaging and labeling at the next Commission meeting.

Dr. Sam Blakemore introduced Ms. Michele Nakata of the Hawaii State Department of Health, Office of Medical Cannabis Control and Regulation, to present on behalf of the Dispensaries Committee. Ms. Nakata provided an overview of the Hawaii program and covered topics ranging from their program timeline of implementation, license types, product availability, quality assurance testing and historical data related to medical cannabis sales. Ms. Nakata concluded the presentation by taking questions from the Commission.

Vice-Chairman Vaughn then recognized Special Agent Senior Dion Robinson to give a report for the Law Enforcement and Legal Committee. Mr. Robinson provided commission members a copy of an informational flyer that was distributed to the Alabama Sheriff's Association at their 2022 Winter Technology Conference. The flyer provided conference attendees information related to law enforcement and the medical cannabis program. Mr. Robinson completed his report by noting that the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency is working closely with Commission staff on the development of the seed-to-sale tracking system especially on product diversion and consumer safety.

Mr. Gamble was recognized and reported on behalf of the Audits Committee. He noted that Ms. Charla Doucet would provide a budget update and a copy of current and future expenditures. Ms. Doucet reviewed the financial document with members.

With subcommittee reports complete, the Commission moved into staff reports. Mr. McMillan updated members of the efforts to secure 2022 supplemental funding and the fiscal year 2023 appropriation by the legislature. Mr. Millan concluded his report by noting the important decisions that lie ahead for the Commission regarding rules and regulations and issuance of request for proposals.

Mr. Autrey was then recognized to give a legal and legislative update. Mr. Autrey introduced Mr. William Webster (Webster Henry Law Firm) to give an update on the rules and regulations for the Alabama Medical Cannabis Program. Mr. Webster explained that he had spent the last several weeks reviewing the Alabama law and studying other states' programs to begin fleshing out an outline to guide the rulemaking process. Mr. Webster shared a copy of the outline and reviewed contents. He also shared an in-depth preview of the draft rules pertaining to dispensaries and explained that the other sections will soon be shared with respective subcommittees for review.

Mr. Autrey completed his report by reviewing the projected timeline for finalizing the rules and regulations.

Ms. Peters was then recognized to report on communication and technology. She began by noting the addition of a patient interest survey to the Commission's website to gauge interest and basic demographic information concerning potential participants in the medical cannabis program.

Ms. Peters then recognized Secretary Marty Redden (Alabama Office of Information Technology) to discuss the request for proposals (RFP) process and how it relates to securing the Commission's seed-to-sale tracking system. Mr. Redden began by stressing the importance of ensuring a fair and competitive process. He also reviewed the sections that are included in an RFP and the process for evaluating the responses.

With the conclusion of staff reports, Vice-Chairman Vaughn moved into the decision items.

Vice-Chairman Vaughn presented a proposal on the issuance of the request for proposals for Alabama's seed-to-sale tracking system. A motion was made to approve the resolution by Ms. Skelton, seconded by Mr. Harwell, and was unanimously approved.

A second decision item was considered to authorize the director to proceed with identifying and negotiating a contract for patient registry services. A motion was made by Dr. Jensen, seconded by Dr. Blakemore, and unanimously approved by the Commission.

With there being no further business, a motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Harwell, seconded by Ms. Skelton, and unanimously approved by the Commission. The meeting adjourned at 2:22 P.M.