ORDINANCE NO. 02-15

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COVINGTON, WASHINGTON, TO EXTEND THE MORATORIUM ON THE ESTABLISHMENT, LOCATION, OPERATION, LICENSING, MAINTENANCE, OR CONTINUATION OF MEDICAL MARIJUANA DISPENSARIES, PRODUCTION FACILITIES, PROCESSING FACILITIES, COLLECTIVE GARDENS, AND RELATED BUSINESSES WITHIN THE CITY OF COVINGTON FOR SIX MONTHS; PROVIDING FOR A PUBLIC HEARING ON THE MORATORIUM; ADOPTING FINDINGS OF FACT SUPPORTING THE MORATORIUM ADOPTED BY ORDINANCE NOs. 08-11, 12-12, 01-13, 07-13, 05-14, and 10-14; AND PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY.

WHEREAS, on August 9, 2011, the Covington City Council passed Ordinance No. 08-11, which declared an emergency necessitating the immediate imposition of a moratorium on the establishment, location, operation, licensing, maintenance, or continuation of medical marijuana dispensaries, production facilities, processing facilities, and collective gardens, as more particularly described in Ordinance No. 08-11; and

WHEREAS, on July 24, 2012, the Covington City Council passed Ordinance No. 12-12, which provided for a six-month extension of the moratorium on the establishment, location, operation, licensing, maintenance, or continuation of medical marijuana dispensaries, production facilities, processing facilities, collective gardens, or any business or organization offering any type of service relating to collective gardens or to producing, processing, or dispensing medical marijuana; and

WHEREAS, on January 8, 2013, August 27, 2013, February 25, 2014, and August 12, 2014, the Covington City Council passed Ordinance Nos. 01-13, 07-13, 05-14, and 10-14, respectively, which provided for additional six-month extensions of said moratorium; and

WHEREAS, Chapter 69.51A of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW), creates an affirmative defense for qualifying patients to the charge of possession of marijuana, and provides that such patients can, as an alternative to growing marijuana for their own use, designate a designated provider who can provide medical marijuana to only one patient at a time; and

WHEREAS, the Washington State Department of Health has opined that "the law [current Chapter 69.51A RCW] does not allow dispensaries" and that it is "not legal to buy or sell marijuana," but the Department of Health has left enforcement of the law to local officials; and

WHEREAS, a recent ruling of Division 1 of the state appellate court ruled that collective gardens were not authorized under current state regulations due to the lack of a state registry and that ruling is currently under review by the Washington State Supreme Court; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Attorneys for Washington State have reiterated that marijuana possession, production, and distribution is a federal criminal offense and that local officials and employees would not be immune to prosecution under the federal Controlled Substances Act, 21 U.S.C.§801 et seq., even if state law decriminalized the use, possession, and production of marijuana for medical purposes; and

WHEREAS, the City of Covington currently has no licensing, zoning, or land use requirements that address collective gardens for medical marijuana production or that address medical marijuana production, processing, or dispensing facilities, should such dispensaries be determined to be authorized; and

WHEREAS, unregulated medical marijuana uses are anticipated to have negative secondary impacts including a possible increase of criminal activity in the area of collective gardens, a possible increase in illegal drug activity in the area of the collective gardens, possible illegal distribution of medical marijuana, and may present health and safety concerns related to the handling of chemicals used in the growing and processing of marijuana, the ventilation of collective gardens and related air quality issues, and the electrical wiring of collective garden facilities; and

WHEREAS, the Covington City Council established a moratorium to prevent the location and vesting of any medical marijuana collective gardens or medical marijuana production, processing, or dispensing facilities within the city while the city lacks the necessary tools to ensure regulation of the negative secondary impacts and health and safety concerns and to maintain the status quo while legal, political, and policy and city code impacts are studied and considered; and

WHEREAS, given the continuing uncertainty of the legal status and regulations governing medical marijuana collective gardens, production facilities, processing facilities, and dispensaries under the current state law, and given the possibility of the state legislature changing state medical marijuana regulations to better conform with the regulations adopted for recreational marijuana uses, the city requires additional time for continued legal review of the complicated legal framework that currently exists and is still evolving; and

WHEREAS, the city must extend the moratorium on the establishment, location, licensing, maintenance, or continuation of medical marijuana dispensaries, production facilities, processing facilities, collective gardens, and related businesses for six months, to act as a stop-gap measure to provide an opportunity for the state to adopt new medical marijuana regulations and for legal clarification of the city's ability to regulate the siting and activities of collective gardens and medical marijuana dispensaries, production facilities, processing facilities, and related businesses if deemed legal, and to avoid the unregulated establishment of collective gardens within the city with rights contrary to and inconsistent with any revision the city may make to its regulatory scheme as a result of the city's continued consideration of this matter; and

WHEREAS, on February 10, 2015, the city council held a public hearing on the moratorium as required by RCW 35A.63.220, and on that date accepted testimony from all members of the public desiring to be heard on the subject; and

WHEREAS, based upon the public testimony received on February 10, 2015, and based upon additional materials presented by city staff, a moratorium of limited duration is in the public interest; and

WHEREAS, on February 10, 2015, the city council considered the foregoing facts, materials, and testimony, and deliberated on the issue of whether to continue the moratorium; and

WHEREAS, RCW 35A.63.220 authorizes the city council to adopt land use moratoria; and

WHEREAS, on February 10, 2015, the city's SEPA Responsible Official determined that the moratorium is exempt from SEPA under RCW 43.21.030(2)(c);

NOW, THEREFORE, THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COVINGTON, WASHINGTON, DOES HEREBY ORDAIN AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Adoption of Defined Terms. For the purpose of this ordinance, the definitions of "Medical marijuana dispensary", "Medical marijuana processing facility", "Medical marijuana production facility", and "Medical marijuana collective garden" in Ordinance No. 08-11 are hereby adopted by reference as if fully set forth herein.

Section 2. Findings of Fact. In accordance with RCW 35A.63.220, which requires the city council to adopt findings of fact justifying the adoption of moratoria, the "WHEREAS" clauses set forth above are hereby adopted as the city council's findings of fact in support of the moratorium imposed by this ordinance and are by this reference incorporated herein as if set forth in their entirety.

Section 3. Moratorium Expiration. This six-month moratorium shall expire six months after the Effective Date, unless earlier terminated.

Section 4. Severability. Should any section, paragraph, sentence, clause, or phrase of this ordinance, or its application to any person or circumstance, be declared unconstitutional or otherwise invalid for any reason, or should any portion of this ordinance be pre-empted by state or federal law or regulation, such decision or preemption shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this ordinance or its application to other persons or circumstances.

Section 5. Corrections. Upon the approval of the city attorney, the city clerk is authorized to make any necessary corrections to this ordinance including, but not limited to, the correction of scrivener's/clerical errors, references, ordinance numbering, section/subsection numbers, and any reference thereto.

Section 6. Effective Date. This ordinance shall be published in the official newspaper of the city and shall take full force and effect five days after the date of publication

ADOPTED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COVINGTON, WASHINGTON, at a regular meeting thereof this 10th day of February, 2015.

Margaret Harto

Mayor Margaret Harto

PUBLISHED: February 13, 2015
EFFECTIVE: February 18, 2015

ATTESTED:

Sharon Scott, City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Sara Springer, City Attorney