

Groups seek to dispense medical pot

By WILL BUSS
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A number of businesses and entrepreneurs have approached local municipalities about becoming retail distribution dispensaries for medical marijuana.



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Kirkwood Pharmacy Group, based in DuQuoin, is filling out paperwork to apply for a license to create a medical marijuana dispensary in Fairview Heights. Company owner Gorgi Naumovski

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could not be reached for comment, but the company has confirmed that it is completing its application to meet the state's deadline, which is Monday.

According to regulations proposed under the state's medical marijuana program, the metro-east can have two dispensaries and one cultivation center per Illinois State Police district. ISP District 11, which covers St. Clair, Madison, Bond, Clinton and Monroe counties, will get two dispensaries and one cultivation center.

Fairview Heights Economic Development Director said two other groups have contacted the city seeking information about establishing dispensaries. The Kirkwood Pharmacy Group made a presentation before City Council members in May.

"A lot of communities

are being contacted," Malloy said. "I know Collinsville has."

Collinsville City Manager Scott Williams said one company has contacted the city about possible zoning and business license information to create a marijuana dispensary there, but the city has not heard any further inquiries.

"If someone is serious about opening a location in Collinsville, then we would entertain conversations with them about locating here," Williams said.

In Troy, Mayor Allen Adomite said the city has approved zoning for a potential cultivation center. Adomite said if it is approved by the state, the production site would be retrofitted in an existing 95,000-square-foot warehouse in the city and would bring 200 to 240 new jobs and an annual payroll of \$9 million to

\$10 million.

"We do expect it will be highly competitive," Adomite said.

Sauget Village Board of Trustees President Rich Sauget Jr. said the board has heard from "numerous groups" about developing medical marijuana dispensaries and cultivation centers there. He also said the village's zoning regulations already allow for this type of business.

In Edwardsville, City Administrator Tim Harr said two groups have visited the city and one has applied for a cultivation center. Harr said Mara Meyers, of MCC LLC, has been approved by the city's zoning board of appeals to develop a cultivation center at the Lakeview Commerce Center on the city's west side.

In July, the St. Clair County Board approved Meyers' application for a \$7 million medical mariju

na farm and greenhouse near Marissa.

In February, retired emergency room physician Dr. William Cruzen confirmed that his wife and former nurse Carla Cruzen was assembling a team of investors and experts to apply for a dispensary in O'Fallon. The Cruzens could not be reached for comment.

The state will approve 22 marijuana growing centers and 60 dispensaries to be developed for Illinois' four-year pilot program, which would allow doctors to prescribe marijuana to treat patients with HIV/AIDS, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, epilepsy and other debilitating diseases.

Illinois Department of Public Health spokeswoman Melaney Arnold

said if the state does not receive enough applications, the process will be reopened until all distribution and cultivation centers have been filled.

Under the proposed rules, dispensary operators will have to pay a \$5,000 nonrefundable application fee, provide proof of \$400,000 in assets and pay a \$30,000 permit fee. There would be a yearly renewal fee of \$25,000 for the permit.

The proposed rules for cultivation centers call for a \$25,000 nonrefundable application fee, proof of \$250,000 in liquid assets and a \$200,000 fee if granted a permit. The yearly renewal fee would be \$100,000.

Arnold said her office has seen more applications for medical marijuana

cards than she anticipated. During the first week of the month, more than 2,000 Illinois residents have applied for ID cards that would allow them to buy and use medical marijuana.

"When we initially thought about the number of patients going to apply in the first couple of days, we thought 200 to 300," Arnold said. "But when we got 2,000, that was definitely more than we expected."

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