

# Cannabis production facility in Lakeport under scrutiny

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Cramahe mayor Mandy Martin said she's been impressed by what Sharpshooter Industries Inc. has proposed to date. - Metroland file photo

Cramahe Township — Questions are being raised about a cannabis production facility being built in Lakeport.

Two residents who live there have written letters complaining that the community wasn't consulted when Sharpshooter Industries Inc. began making plans to grow marijuana and manufacture oils in the hamlet.

Cramahe Community Association co-founder Gritt Koehl has become involved, asking council at its last meeting why the municipality gave a letter of support to the company for its proposed venture a year ago after receiving information from Sharpshooter that was “really poorly prepared and presented.”

Council subsequently approved an interim control bylaw that put on hold for one year any proposal to establish a marijuana production facility in the township because it wanted to review “its whole approach to cannabis and production facilities,” she said.

“There's a lot of people that are unhappy in this township and in other townships because of grow-ops that are going on that are causing problems.”

Koehl asked why council hadn't told Sharpshooter to suspend its plans.

Mayor Mandy Martin, the lone member of council who wasn't in office when the decisions referred to by Koehl were made, said that “there was nothing illegal about the proposal at all, and we all knew that cannabis production was going to become legal.”

The facility at Lakeport “is quite different from ... the grow-ops you see scattered throughout our countryside which are being operated for people” who are licensed to grow their own medical marijuana, Martin said.

Sharpshooter will be producing “for a completely different market,” she said. “They're not growing it on behalf of individuals, it's going to enter the industrial marketplace.”

Koehl said planners throughout Northumberland County discussed the issue of cannabis production facilities and reached the consensus that they “would be best suited to industrial parks or very remote rural areas,” not a place like Lakeport where there are residences.

But Martin pointed out that the property Sharpshooter acquired is zoned industrial.

Koehl questioned “why it was pushed forward so fast, without looking at any of the implications or ramifications.”

Were council members anxious to approve “because they really wanted desperately something to be in that location?” she asked.

“If an industry wants to come to town and they are willing to abide by the zoning regulations and establish a site plan agreement, then they are perfectly within their rights to do so,” Martin responded.

Chief administrative officer Craig Brooks said staff had met with Sharpshooter representatives “to establish what would be required for the site.”

“We have received some public concern about what was happening,” he said. “Since that meeting took place, we have had staff on site as well to reiterate what is required and how they were failing to meet those requirements at that time.”

Brooks explained that the company hadn't obtained permits before working on the building it acquired, as well as the property's fencing and landscaping.

The company has “offered to comply at this point, so we're just waiting for them to go through ... the proper steps to enter into a site plan agreement,” he said.

“Everybody has to follow the regulations,” Martin said.

The mayor attended a town hall meeting held by Sharpshooter in December to explain the \$10-million project, and she said she came away impressed by what she heard.

“I felt that they really want to be a positive presence in the community,” she said. “They're not here to desecrate ... or do damage. They're just now starting to realize how many hoops that they're going to have to go through, how much is required.

“They need to be compliant in so many ways and that doesn't happen overnight,” Martin said. “I thought their timeline (for starting production next summer) ... was not quite realistic.”