

Cramahe residents don't want marijuana facilities in township

Volatile chemicals, groundwater contamination among the concerns

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Gritt Koehl was one of the residents who spoke against allowing a cannabis facility in Lakeport at a public meeting in Cramahe Township. - Natalie Hamilton photo

COLBORNE -- Cramahe residents spoke up Jan. 28 against the prospect of having a cannabis production facility (CPF) in Lakeport.

From the potential risk of volatile chemicals, such as butane, to the possible contamination of the groundwater, citizens voiced these concerns and others about CPFs in Cramahe Township during a public meeting at the Keeler Centre.

The meeting was hosted by the Township of Cramahe Council to solicit input about potential changes to the official plan and a zoning bylaw that would allow cannabis production and processing facilities to operate in some areas.

Specifically, citizens also learned the current Cramahe council would not be revoking a decision made by the previous council to provide a letter of support to Sharpshooter Industries Inc. for its intent to use a Lakeport industrial property for a CPF.

This didn't sit well with residents who do not want a CPF in Lakeport.

"Lakeport is a residential hamlet that happens to have one property zoned industrial," said Grafton resident Grit Kohl.

Mayor Mandy Martin said while there is currently no site plan or any information at this time about the Sharpshooter site, the proposed site is an industrial property.

For many years, Lakeport "has been an industrial area and has functioned as such," Martin said.

"It has historically been there long before many of the residences. It was an integral industrial part of the community."

Heather Sadler, manager of planning and development for Cramahe, read aloud a letter from Defend Lakeport, a group that disagrees with council's decision to grandfather Sharpshooter Industries.

The group said there hasn't been an adequate number of studies completed, the location is adjacent to sensitive land use and there is not enough distance of separation between the factory and residences.

Proposed amendments to the official plan and bylaw include the addition of a new subsection related to cannabis production and processing.

There's a proposed amendment to permit only cannabis micro-cultivation on prime agricultural lands to protect prime agricultural soils. Cannabis micro-cultivation is being defined as an area of cannabis cultivation less than 200 square metres.

Other amendments would add cannabis production and processing as a permitted use in both the rural and employment lands designations.

Another amendment would not permit cannabis production and processing in the environmental protection designation.

The final proposed amendment states development of a new cannabis production and processing facility may be permitted on municipal water services and private sewage disposal systems subject to approval by the municipality and the appropriate approval authority.

All CPF applicants would have to meet with the planning department. There would be a number of requirements, including the need to be in accordance with zoning bylaw provisions. Any development on the site would have to go through a detailed review by the planning department. The process would also include a hydrogeological report, an environmental review, air treatment and noise impact evaluations and more, Sadler noted.

Following the meeting, a recommendation report will be prepared and presented at a later meeting of council following a full review of the proposed official plan amendment.