



RNRA
RIVER NORTH
RESIDENTS
ASSOCIATION

February 29, 2020

Re: Adult Use Cannabis Dispensary located at 216 W. Ohio Street

Farzin Parang
Chairman, Zoning Board of Appeals
121 N. LaSalle St. 10th Floor
Chicago, IL 60602

Chairman Parang...

River North Residents Association (RNRA) is a 501 (c)4 non-profit, volunteer neighborhood advocacy organization founded in 1997. We are champions for quality of life issues in River North.

RNRA does **not** support the MoCa, LLC, dba MoCa – Modern Cannabis application for special use to establish an Adult Use Cannabis Dispensary located at 216 W. Ohio Street. We believe that the location is not well-suited for such a retail business.

In accordance with the application process protocol, RNRA worked with the applicant, MoCa LLC dba MoCa – Modern Cannabis, to schedule and host a community meeting to provide information about the special use request and to invite local public feedback. An introductory meeting was held with MoCa leadership and members of the RNRA Executive Board on January 6, 2020 to learn about their company, their implementation plans and to discuss scheduling the community meeting. A community meeting was subsequently held on Wednesday, January 29, 2020.

Representing MoCa were Danny Marks, CEO; Doug Marks, COO; Barry Golin, CFO/Pharmacist; and Michael Chasen, Chief Security Officer. Danny Marks presented for the team. His presentation addressed MoCa's history as a medical dispensary in the Logan Square neighborhood since February 2016 and as an adult-use recreational dispensary since January 1,

2020. Danny talked about their team of approximately 30 people and their commitment to diverse hiring practices. He also discussed the relationship that MoCa has with multiple cultivators that allow them to curate an attractive product selection.

Danny reviewed the physical site plan, client management and queuing, security, pedestrian and vehicular traffic, product sales, and staffing for the facility. He said that community engagement was very important to MoCa's success, but spent little time addressing social equity issues that we believe should be an important aspect of the implementation. Audience questions centered on facility build-out, client management, security, traffic and social equity.

RNRA board members referenced the ZBA General Criteria requirements in distilling our recommendation to support the application for special use at this location. We considered

- pedestrian safety and vehicular traffic
- the physical site plan (both layout and capacity)
- building scale and design
- management of clients both inside and outside the facility
- security plans and staffing
- hours of operation
- outdoor lighting and advertising
- compatibility with the surrounding character of the community

There was a keen awareness by MoCa leaders that RNRA Board members and residents were very concerned about the January 6th burglary of the MoCa Logan Square dispensary where thieves circumvented security systems and made off with a very substantial amount of cash. Questions about how security could have been evaded were not answered in a very reassuring fashion. MoCa subsequently hired Garry McCarthy, former Chicago Police Department Superintendent and River North resident, as a security consultant.

MoCa provided some generic crime data in police districts where dispensaries exist and crime data 14 days pre/post January 1, 2020. We did not find the data download to be especially useful in our focus on how they would address their business implementation at 216 W. Ohio St. Concerns about security remain high. The property is located just a block east of the Ohio St off ramp, a major traffic feeder to River North and beyond. There are concerns that have been heightened by criminal actions in nearby late night clubs that bad actors use the Ohio/Ontario off/on ramps as quick getaway alternatives. We do not want to jeopardize the safety of our residents or neighborhood guests.

MoCa also engaged a real estate appraiser, traffic consultant and land use analysis consultant. None of them presented in the meeting. The traffic consultant, KLOA, had been retained, but

had not conducted a traffic study at the time of the meeting or present any meaningful information that might have mitigated resident concerns.

The entrance to the proposed dispensary is on very busy Ohio St. and a plan for a temporary client queuing tent or a permanent shelter on the west side of the facility was discussed. How such a queuing solution would affect traffic and pedestrian safety was not fully addressed by MoCa. A poorly maintained surface parking lot with multiple ingress/egress would provide 10 parking places for MoCa clients. Hours of operation and the retirement of a late night liquor license at 216 W. Ohio St. would be considered a plus by residents.

The property owner 216 West Ohio, LLC, is a neighborhood resident, but can do a better job with upkeep of the property by addressing rusted metalwork, weathered video boxes on the adjacent outdoor patio and a graffiti tarnished message box at the entrance. Such minimal maintenance would demonstrate a measure of care and pride of ownership that would enhance the pedestrian and drive-by traffic experience. This is a first impression for many residents, newcomers and guests to the neighborhood.

Representatives of the Executive Board met with Alderman Reilly and his liaison, Joanna Angarone, who attended all of our community meetings, to share with them our community meeting experiences and final observations. We enjoy a strong partnership with Alderman Reilly and the Ward 42 team as we jointly advocate for River North residents. We shared with them our concerns about security, high volume Ohio St. off ramp vehicular traffic, and client management.

Please feel free to reach out to me at mriordan@rnrachicago.org if you have any additional questions. I have also attached a list of Best Practices for the cannabis business operators that our board recommends. We value your support and thank the Zoning Board of Appeals for allowing us to participate in this important resident-inclusive and transparent process.

Sincerely submitted on behalf of River North Residents Association...

Mike Riordan
President
River North Residents Association
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