

City leaders plan to bring a proposed ordinance before the City Council on Monday night that would limit how close together new marijuana-related businesses could be. The ordinance would place a 1,000-foot spacing requirement between like uses, such as grow facility to grow facility, processing facility to processing facility and dispensary to dispensary, City Planner Brad Bates said. But a grow facility, a processing facility and a dispensary could all exist within a 1,000-foot area without violating the ordinance, he said. All existing marijuana-related businesses would be grandfathered in and would not be subject to the ordinance if it is approved. City Manager Mike Carter said conversations with city leaders in surrounding communities spurred the Sand Springs proposal. One city manager told him that that official's community, which is smaller than Sand Springs, has "more than 80 grow facilities that have started to take over most of the available retail space in their community," he said. "I do not think we want to see a dominance of one industry concentrated in our community to the detriment of opportunity for a more diversified retail environment," Carter said. "We feel that this ordinance will allow us to respect the intent of the voters and the rights of owners of medical marijuana businesses while also making sure that our community is able to serve the wants and needs of all types of businesses and consumers." According to Bates, the city has approved 10 dispensaries, although only eight have opened. Eleven grow-facility applications have been approved, and two others were denied, he said. Ten processing-facility applications have been considered, with nine approved and one denied. He said two pending applications for grow facilities have yet to be heard. Bates said the proposal "is fair to the medical marijuana industry, as other communities have merely banned growing and processing facilities altogether." He said the ordinance also would make it uniform that all marijuana-related businesses must be at least 1,000 feet from a public school, private school or preschool as defined by the Oklahoma Medical Marijuana Authority's guidelines for measuring that distance. Bates said the city collected about \$322,000 in sales taxes from dispensaries between May 2019 and May of

this year, adding that the city receives taxes only from dispensaries, not from growing or processing facilities. For Carter, tax revenue isnâ€™t a priority in the conversation, however.

â€œThis is about ensuring that we have a diverse business community,â€• he said. The council will take up the spacing issue as questions continue to surface about whether the OMMA can meet the state Legislatureâ€™s directive to hire more compliance inspectors. During a recent legislative study meeting to address the relationship of medical cannabis businesses to others in the agriculture industry, Rep. Dick Lowe, R-Amber, asked whether there should be a â€œtemporary moratoriumâ€• on issuing new grow licenses â€œuntil we can get a handleâ€• on staffing needs, illegal activity and agricultural impacts, the Tulsa World reported. State law does not limit the number of commercial licenses the OMMA and Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs Control can approve, but a business must have proper licensing from both agencies before it can open. New OMMA Director Adria Berry didnâ€™t entirely reject Loweâ€™s idea, but she said she needed to â€œtread cautiously on this because that really is a policy question.â€• More than 12,500 marijuana-related business licenses had been issued in the state as of Sept. 3, a nearly 35% increase over August 2020 data, OMMA records show. Growers make up more than two-thirds of those licensed businesses. Carter said he thinks it is clear that â€œOMMA is not in a position with staffing to ensure that all of our communitiesâ€™ interests are protected.â€• â€œWe want to make sure that Sand Springs is in a position to keep moving forward as a total community,â€• he said. â€œWe would not want to see any one industry â€” no matter what it is â€” dominate our area to the detriment of a healthy and eclectic business community that can serve a broad range of wants and needs of our citizens.â€•

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