



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** CANNABIS REGULATORY COMMISSION BOARD

**FROM:** CHRISTOPHER RIGGS, ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**SUBJECT:** TRANSFERS OF OWNERSHIP – APPLICATION AMENDMENTS

**DATE:** JUNE 17, 2024

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**BACKGROUND:** Over the course of the prior months, several adult use license awardees and one medical permittee have submitted proposed changes to their ownership structures. This memorandum will outline four such changes to ownership that have been proposed. The changes, contracts, and new parties to the industry have been vetted by the Office of Compliance and Investigations and have been deemed regulatorily compliant and holding the necessary qualifications. The supplemental reports created by the investigators in the Office of Compliance and Investigations have been summarized here for the benefit of the Commissioners and Executive staff.

**AUTHORITY:** Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 24:6I-7(k)(2), the sale or transfer of any interest of five percent or more in a medical cannabis cultivator, medical cannabis manufacturer, medical cannabis dispensary, or clinical registrant permit shall be subject to approval by the New Jersey Cannabis Regulatory Commission (the “Commission”) and conditioned on the entity that is purchasing or receiving transfer of the interest in the medical cannabis cultivator, medical cannabis manufacturer, medical cannabis dispensary, or clinical registrant permit completing a criminal history record background check pursuant to the requirements of the statute.

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 17:30A-7.5, an Alternative Treatment Center (“ATC”) permit is not assignable or transferable without Commission approval, and it shall be immediately null and void if the alternative treatment center ceases to operate, if the alternative treatment center’s ownership changes or if the alternative treatment center relocates.

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 17:30A-7.10, the fee to apply for the transfer of ownership for an ATC is \$20,000.

The governing personal use regulations regarding transfers of ownership interest fall under N.J.A.C. 17:30-9.3 and are as follows:

- (a) From the submission of a conditional license conversion application or an annual license application to at least two years after the cannabis business commences operations,



a license holder holding an annual license shall not make any change to more than 50 percent of its ownership interest, except that:

1. A transfer of ownership interest in a license applicant or license holder from a deceased owner to their heir shall not be prohibited; and
2. A transfer of ownership interest in a license applicant or license holder from a deceased owner to their surviving spouse, domestic partner, or civil union partner, if the license was issued jointly to both the parties, shall not be prohibited.

(b) From the submission of the conditional license conversion application or an annual license application to at least two years after the cannabis business commences operations, a license holder may add new loans from new or existing financial sources or gifts.

(c) Until at least two years after the cannabis business commences operations, a diversely owned business license holder shall maintain all conditions required to qualify as eligible for its diversely owned business certification.

(d) Until at least two years after the cannabis business commences operations, a social equity business license holder shall maintain the conditions required to qualify for its social equity business status.

(e) A license holder operating as a microbusiness shall not transfer ownership interest such that the license holder no longer qualifies as a microbusiness.

(f) If the cannabis business ceases operations during the two-year period after the cannabis business commences operations, the license holder may not transfer the license to another entity; the license will be considered to be abandoned and will be returned to the Commission.

(g) A cannabis business license holder shall not provide, transfer, or sell, or offer to provide, transfer, or sell any ownership interest to or employ or offer to employ any Commission member or employee restricted from such transactions by the provisions of sections 33 through 35 of P.L. 2019, c. 153 (N.J.A.C. 24:6I-26 through 28).

(h) The Commission retains discretion to determine when a transfer of ownership interests has occurred.

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 17:30-7.17(j)(3), the fee to apply for the transfer of more than 50 percent of ownership interest in a license holder is \$20,000.



## **COMPLETENESS REVIEW:**

### **HarvestWorks Farm Corp (App IDs 2294, 2295)**

The ownership change across both applications (Cultivator and Manufacturer) would see owner Rita Ruggieri (100%) transfer a portion of her ownership stake in the company to individual Jorge Lopes in exchange for an initial investment of \$1,625,000.00. Ms. Ruggieri will retain 68% ownership and Mr. Lopes will receive 32% ownership. A PHD was filed by Mr. Lopes and no derogatory information was found.

### **Elevated Herb LLC (App ID 2771)**

The ownership change for this application would see current owner Peter Johnson (24.75%) transfer a portion of his ownership stake in the company to Richard Dinar in exchange for an initial investment of \$59,400.00. Mr. Johnson will retain 12.4% ownership and Mr. Dinar will receive 12.35% equity in the company. Remaining owners Robert Souders, Olfat Kataw, Michele Sherlock, and Bhagirath Maheta will continue to retain their ownership interest of 27.25%, 27.25%, 10.25%, and 10%, respectively. A PHD was filed by Mr. Dinar and no derogatory information was found.

### **Glass Meadows LLC (App ID 3212)**

The ownership change for this application would see current owner Max Guttman (49%), through Glass Meadows New Jersey LLC, transfer a portion of his ownership stake in the company to Andrew Sack, who will become the Chief Operating Officer. Mr. Guttman will retain 41.5% ownership and Mr. Sack will receive 7.5% equity in the company. Majority owner Serdar Mizrakci will continue to hold 51% ownership interest. A PHD was filed by Mr. Guttman and no derogatory information was found.

### **Niche LLC (Medical Permittee)**

The ownership change for this application would see Niche, LLC bringing on small, passive investors to assist in completing construction and providing working capital once Niche, LLC becomes operational. These small investors are proposing to invest in Niche, LLC through an investment entity named 1111 Niche, LLC, which would in aggregate own 30% of Niche, LLC. Three of the investors in 1111 Niche, LLC are existing members of Niche, LLC. PHDs and EDFs were filed by all potential owners, and no derogatory information was found.



**RECOMMENDATION:** The Office of Compliance and Investigations recommends approval for the four applications to amend the licenses set forth above and authorize the ownership structure change as presented by their representatives. All owners and officers that will hold positions after approval of the changes have been vetted as required by the statutes and regulations and have been deemed qualified to hold their positions in the adult use cannabis market.

## **APPENDIX**

### **N.J.A.C. 17:30A-7.5 Permit issuance; nontransferability of permit**

(a) Upon approval of the application for an ATC permit and payment of the required fee, the permitting authority may conduct an onsite assessment of the alternative treatment center to determine if the facility adheres to the Act and this chapter.

(b) An ATC permit is not assignable or transferable without Commission approval, and it shall be immediately null and void if the alternative treatment center ceases to operate, if the alternative treatment center's ownership changes or if the alternative treatment center relocates.

(c) This chapter does not prohibit a political subdivision of this State from limiting the number of alternative treatment centers that may operate in the political subdivision or from enacting reasonable local ordinances applicable to alternative treatment centers.

### **N.J.A.C. 17:30A-7.10 Fees**

(a) The following fees apply:

1. The annual fee for the review of a permit renewal application for an alternative treatment center is \$ 20,000;
2. The fee to apply for a change of location of the alternative treatment center is \$10,000;
3. The fee to apply for a change of capacity or any physical modification or addition to the facility is \$ 2,000; and
4. The fee to apply for the transfer of ownership of a permit is \$ 20,000.

### **17:30-9.3 Transfers of ownership interest**

(a) From the submission of a conditional license conversion application or an annual license application to at least two years after the cannabis business commences operations, a license holder holding an annual license shall not make any change to more than 50 percent of its ownership interest, except that a transfer of the ownership interest license applicant or license holder from a deceased owner to the deceased:

1. Owner's heir shall not be prohibited;

2. Owner's surviving spouse, domestic partner, or civil union partner, if the license was issued jointly to both the parties, shall not be prohibited.

(b) From the submission of the conditional license conversion application or an annual license application to least two years after the cannabis business commences operations, a license holder may add new loans from new or existing financial sources or gifts.

(c) Until at least two years after the cannabis business commences operations, a diversely owned business license holder shall maintain all conditions required to qualify as eligible for its diversely owned business certification.

(d) Until at least two years after the cannabis business commences operations, a social equity business license holder shall maintain the conditions required to qualify for its social equity business status

(e) A license holder operating as a microbusiness shall not transfer ownership interest such that the license holder no longer qualifies as a microbusiness.

(f) If the cannabis business ceases operations during the two-year period after the cannabis business commences operations, the license holder may not transfer the license to another entity; the license will be considered to be abandoned and will be returned to the Commission.

(g) A cannabis business license holder shall not provide, transfer, or sell, or offer to provide, transfer, or sell any ownership interest to or employ or offer to employ any Commission member or employee restricted from such transactions by the provisions of sections 33 through 35 of P.L. 2019, c. 153 (N.J.A.C. 24:6I-26 through 28).

(h) The Commission retains discretion to determine when a transfer of ownership interests has occurred.

### **17:30-7.17 Cannabis business and testing laboratory fees**

(j) The following material change fees shall be paid by license holders, as applicable:

1. The fee to apply for a change of location of a cannabis business premises is:

i. Standard cannabis business annual license holder: \$10,000; or

ii. Microbusiness license holder: \$1,000;

2. The fee to apply for a change or modification of the cannabis business' capacity or physical plant is \$2,000;

i. This fee shall not apply to a microbusiness converting to a standard cannabis business pursuant to N.J.A.C. 17:30-7.15; and

3. The fee to apply for the transfer of more than 50 percent of ownership interest in a license holder is \$20,000.

i. Any financial source, management services contractor, owner, or principal may be required to pay background investigation fees as part of an ownership interest transfer