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## CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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To: Planning Board

From: Jeff Roberts, Senior Manager for Zoning and Development

Suzannah Bigolin, Urban Design Planner

Swaathi Joseph, Associate Zoning Planner

Date: December 27, 2017

Re: **Special Permit PB #331, Commonwealth Alternative Care, Inc.  
Registered Marijuana Dispensary at 1381 Cambridge Street – Continued  
Hearing**

#### **Update**

Since the last Planning Board meeting, the Applicant has worked with staff to respond to comments and questions raised in the initial review of the application. The Applicant's recent submission provides additional information about the project in narrative and graphic form. This memo comments on the additional information and proposed changes. Previously submitted staff materials are also attached.

#### **Planning Board Action**

Commonwealth Alternative Care, Inc. is proposing to renovate a portion of the existing building at 1385 Cambridge Street to operate a registered medical marijuana dispensary (RMD). The project does not propose adding any parking or bicycle parking spaces. The proposal includes renovation of the first floor of the existing building to include the RMD sales area and a smaller sub-tenant space to be occupied by an active retail use along Cambridge Street. The Applicant is proposing to locate its corporate offices on the second and third floors of the same building and provide storage in the basement.

The site is within the Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conversation District and on the National Register. The Conservation District Commission has reviewed and approved the exterior alterations, and the National Register status did not trigger any additional reviews. The project is located in the Business A (BA) District and requires a Special Permit to allow a RMD use per Section 11.800. Applicable sections of the zoning are provided in an appendix.

Requested Special Permits	Summarized Findings <i>(see appendix for zoning text excerpts)</i>
Medical Marijuana Dispensary Use in Business B District (Sections 11.800)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Location shall serve an area that currently does not have reasonable access to medical marijuana.</li><li>• The location is at least five hundred feet from a school, daycare center, preschool or afterschool facility or any facility in which children commonly congregate, or if not located at such a distance, it is sufficiently buffered from such facilities such that its users will not be adversely impacted by its operation.</li><li>• Site design provides convenient, safe and secure access and egress for clients and employees arriving to and leaving from the site using all modes of transportation, including drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists and public transportation users.</li><li>• Traffic generated shall not create a substantial adverse impact on nearby residential uses.</li><li>• Loading, refuse and service areas are designed to be secure and shielded from abutting uses.</li><li>• Building and site are designed to be compatible with other buildings in the area and to mitigate any negative aesthetic impacts that might result from required security measures and restrictions on visibility into the building's interior.</li></ul> <p><i>(See full criteria in appendix)</i></p>
General Special Permit Criteria (Section 10.43)	Special permits will be normally granted if the zoning requirements are met, unless it is found not to be in the public interest due to one of the criteria enumerated in Section 10.43 (see appendix).

### Planning Board Comments from First Hearing

The following summarizes some of the key comments made by the Planning Board at the November 14, 2017 hearing. The Applicant has provided responses in the submitted materials.

- Review options for meeting accessibility requirements at all building entrances.
- Consider expanding the retail frontage on Cambridge Street and area of retail to make it viable for long-term use as well.
- Review building façade treatment to improve the pedestrian experience.
- Continue to reach out to the nursery school and procure a letter of support if possible.

### **Staff Comments on New Materials**

The supplemental material dated December 4, 2017 primarily addresses concerns that were raised by the Planning Board associated with accessibility, street activation on Cambridge Street, and the architecture of the project. The revised set of plans and supporting graphic materials show changes to the interior layout and exit location, and ground floor façade design, without altering the original project program.

While the Cambridge Street renderings still appear a little dark, Staff is supportive of the changes and the improved streetscape appearance, particularly as the retail frontage is maximized and the dispensary does not have a presence on Cambridge Street. Further, the revised retail entrance location appears to address accessibility concerns. Staff also appreciate the Applicant's efforts to work with the Arts Council to add some artwork to the corporate entrance.

In order to expand the retail frontage on Cambridge Street, the dispensary exit has been relocated to Spring Street. As the new entry is not historically an opening, the façade design will need to be reviewed by the Mid Cambridge Neighborhood Conservation District Commission. A hearing is scheduled for January 8, and revised elevations showing the new entry with a modified lintel that matches the historic details have recently been submitted.

### **Continuing Review**

The following is a summary of issues that staff recommends should be further studied by the Applicant, either in preparing revised materials if the Planning Board continues the hearing to a future date, or as conditions for ongoing design review by staff if the Board decides to grant the special permit:

- Additional detail on the proposed hours of operation for the dispensary as the supplemental materials mentions that only for the cultivation facility.
- Additional detail on the operational plan for vehicular loading and service, as well as trash and refuse storage.
- Revised plans clearly showing sidewalk grades and finished floor elevations, and access from the dispensary reception to the hall that provides access to the restrooms.
- Review of all exterior materials, colors, façade alterations and details, which shall also be reviewed by the staff at Cambridge Historical Commission.
- Review of any proposed mechanical equipment on the rooftop, façade or exterior of the building.
- Review of exterior signage, lighting, and other security features that may be required by state regulations. Any proposed outdoor lighting should be designed to conform to the guidelines recommended in the proposed Cambridge Outdoor Lighting Ordinance.
- Coordination with the Department of Public Works regarding planned reconstruction of public spaces adjacent to the site.