

Pot ordinance on pace for approval

JULIA NAGY/
LANSING STATE
JOURNAL
There are at
least 55
medical
marijuana
establishments
in Lansing's
city limits. City
officials appear
closer to
creating an
ordinance that
limits how
many are
allowed to
operate.



City Council could vote
on proposal to limit
establishments next month

ERIC LACY
LANSING STATE JOURNAL

LANSING -- The city's long-awaited ordinance on medical marijuana could be approved by City Council next month because Planning Board members appeared Tuesday willing to accept zoning regulations that would limit the number of establishments that sell marijuana.

Planning Board members are expected to review the ordinance again at their Oct. 4 meeting. City Council is likely to schedule an Oct 24 public hearing at City Hall. A vote from the full eight-member council could follow that night.

The Planning Board's Oct. 4 meeting

is expected to take place 6:30 p.m. at the Neighborhood Empowerment Center, 600 W. Maple St. It will be open to the public.

At-Large Council Member Carol Wood, who attended Tuesday's Planning Board meeting, is hopeful the council can vote and approve the ordinance by the end of October.

"I've learned to take this one day at a time," said Wood, when asked afterward what the chances are of approving the ordinance this fall. "I think that's the most important thing; taking it one day at a time, getting where we need to be and taking it from there."

City officials are expected to present a map at the Planning Board's meeting that shows where medical marijuana establishments would be allowed to open under the zoning regulations

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IN BRIEF

56-year-old DeWitt man killed in motorcycle crash

OLIVE TWP. - A 56-year-old DeWitt man died Wednesday after an early-morning motorcycle crash in rural Clinton County.

The man, whom officials have not identified, was riding northbound on Airport Road at 6:07 a.m. when a southbound vehicle attempted to turn left onto Jason Road and collided with the motorcycle, said Sgt. Jeff Clarke with the Clinton County Sheriff's Office.

The motorcyclist died after being transported to an area hospital. He was not wearing a helmet, Clark said.

The driver of the southbound vehicle was not injured, Clark said. Officials continue to investigate the crash.

Pro-marijuana group loses appeals over access to ballot

LANSING - Marijuana won't be on Michigan's statewide ballot in November.

The state appeals court and the Michigan Supreme Court each turned down appeals Wednesday by a group trying to legalize the recreational use of marijuana.

A group called the Michigan Comprehensive Cannabis Law Reform Committee submitted 354,000 signatures, apparently enough to get marijuana on the ballot. But the Board of State Canvassers said more than 200,000 were collected outside a 180-day period, a decision that left the group short of enough names.

In August, a judge at the Court of Claims said the state had "no clear legal duty" to count the stale signatures.

Senate OKs bill to allow dogs on restaurant patios

LANSING - Patrons could bring their dogs along while eating in outdoor areas of restaurants under legislation advancing in Michigan's Legislature.

State law generally prohibits live animals at restaurants.

The legislation — which supporters say could boost tourism — was approved 32-4 by the Senate Wednesday and sent to the House for consideration. The bill would allow dogs on restaurant patios under certain circumstances.

The legislation wouldn't require restaurant owners to allow dogs, and local communities could pass ordinances prohibiting dogs on restaurant patios.

Ex-principal in corruption case sentenced to 15 months

DETROIT - A former Detroit principal who took more than \$58,000 in school supplies kickbacks has been sentenced to 15 months in prison.

Ronnie Sims appeared Wednesday in federal court in Detroit.

He is one of 12 principals, a district administrator and a vendor charged in a scheme that involved bogus invoices for chairs, paper and other supplies, some of which were never delivered. In return, gift cards, cash and checks were given to school employees.

Vendor Norman Shy was sentenced Tuesday to five years in prison, and ex-administrator Clara Flowers was sentenced to three years. The government says the district was defrauded out of \$2.7 million and that Shy paid out about \$900,000 in kickbacks.

WILLIAMSTON GETS UPSCALE EATERY



DAVE WASINGER/LANSING STATE JOURNAL

Manager Emily Gray and owner Nick Gavrilides in the dining area at Gracie's Contemporary Bistro in Williamston on Wednesday. Gavrilides, who also owns the Soup Spoon in Lansing, took over Gracie's on June 29. "It's just a little rebrand to establish ourselves and set a format for our food concept and bar concept," Gavrilides says.

Soup Spoon owner to meld old with new at Gracie's bistro

CURT SMITH
LANSING STATE JOURNAL

WILLIAMSTON – For a small town such as Williamston, the options for quality dining just keep growing.

The latest restaurant addition is being shaped by Nick Gavrilides, owner of the popular Soup Spoon on Lansing's east side.

But don't expect a clone of the Soup Spoon. True, Gavrilides considered a total rebranding when he bought Gracie's Place, at 151 S. Putnam St., in late June.

But in the end, he went with a meld of old and new. The new business is called

At a glance

Name: Gracie's Contemporary Bistro
Where: 151 S. Putnam St., Williamston
Hours: 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Tuesdays-Thursdays, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Fridays-Saturdays, Monday hours coming soon.
Phone: 655-1100
Facebook: www.facebook.com/graciescontemporarybistro

Gracie's Contemporary Bistro.

"It's just a little rebrand to establish ourselves and set a format for our food concept and bar concept," he said

Wednesday while sitting at a high table next to the granite-topped bar.

"But we want to keep the history, keep a tie to (Gracie's Place)."

He said the new name preserves a familiar name in Williamston and the restaurant's new direction.

"We're offering upscale food with a really artistic presentation," said Gavrilides, 41. "It's a blended concept of upscale and comfort."

The current dinner menu — it's going to be revised continually — offers:

» Braised lamb shank with creamy

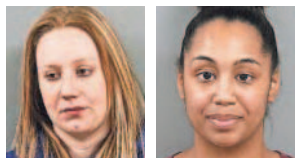
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Women who left children home alone to go to Meijer are charged with abuse

KEN PALMER
LANSING STATE JOURNAL

EAST LANSING - Two East Lansing women who left their young children home alone while they went shopping have been charged with child abuse, police said.

Andria Nicole Downes and Alexandria Jane Dockery, both 25, were arraigned last week in 54B District Court on a count of fourth-degree child abuse, a misdemeanor punishable by up to a year in jail. Both are free on a \$1,000 bond, according to police and court records.



Alexandria
Jane
Dockery

Andria Nicole
Downes

ords.

The charges stem from an incident last week in which Downes reported that her three children - ages 6, 4 and 4 - were missing, East Lansing police said

in a news release.

Police contacted the children's father, who told them his 6-year-old daughter had called him the night before and said she was scared because no adults were home, police said in the release. The father said he brought the children to his home in Delta Township after he was unable to reach the mother.

Officers learned that Downes and Dockery had gone shopping at a local Meijer store that night, leaving their children home. Dockery has two chil-

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Ordinance

Continued from Page 3A

proposed in the ordinance. Medical marijuana establishments are defined under Lansing's proposed ordinance as any medical marijuana provisioning centers (also known as a dispensaries), caregiver centers, grower facilities, processor facilities and safety compliance facilities.

The council's Public Safety Committee and the City Attorney's Office decided last week in the ordinance's latest draft -- its sixth this year -- that medical marijuana establishments must be at least 1,000 feet from schools, child care centers, parks and playgrounds. Proposed zoning regulations also say medical marijuana establishments must be at least 500 feet away from other medical marijuana establishments, churches and substance abuse treatment centers.

Planning Board Member Marta Cerna expressed concern in Tuesday's meeting that the ordinance could allow too many establishments. Citing statistics from a state Licensing and Regulatory Affairs report that said there were 6,982 licensed medical marijuana patients in Ingham County last year, Cerna suggested that "one location or two can service this amount" of patients.

Cerna, however, and three other board members didn't appear to take issue with the proposed ordinance's general framework. Strict city-wide regulations for medical marijuana establishments and a new licensing procedure they must follow would likely reduce the number of dispensaries throughout the city.

Lansing currently doesn't have a cap on medical marijuana establishments and hasn't confirmed how many currently operate, although the Lansing State Journal counted approximately 55 in late July. A city-wide moratorium on opening new establishments went into effect May 12.

Uncertainty in Lansing about the medical marijuana industry hasn't stopped Weedmaps, a Irvine, California-based company, from promoting its brand in the city. Founded in 2008, the company bills itself as "the leading marijuana dispensary, delivery and retail finder, and a multiple platform digital

hub for the global marijuana community."

Its website currently lists 18 dispensaries in Lansing that are rated one to five stars and have customer reviews. At least two billboards for Weedmaps have been posted in the city, one along Interstate 496 and another on West Saginaw Highway.

Chris Beals, Weedmaps' president and general counsel, told the Lansing State Journal this week the company employs 260 people, is growing quickly and tracks closely markets like Lansing that appear more willing to embrace medical marijuana than others.

"We are like any other company, and yeah, we deal with the stigmas all of the time," Beals said. "People think all the time the marijuana industry is being ran by a bunch of either goons or sleepy stoners. That misconception is changing slowly, but it's sort of one of those things where it's two steps forward, one step back."

If Lansing's ordinance is approved, Wood said in Tuesday that no owners of medical marijuana establishments currently open will have a "vested right" to stay open in the city without a license.

The ordinance requires all medical marijuana establishments to obtain a license from the city through the City Clerk's Office. The city currently doesn't require licenses for establishments.

The current proposal does not include a cap on the number of dispensaries. A proposed 2011 ordinance on medical marijuana would have capped the number of dispensaries in the city at 42. That ordinance stalled as the city waited for state clarification on dispensaries, which were not part of the Medical Marihuana Act voters approved in 2008.

The latest draft ordinance says each application for a license would require a fee of about \$3,000, although several higher figures have been discussed in earlier versions.

If an application is denied, the applicant would get about \$1,500 returned. If a license is issued, the first annual fee would be \$1,500 with an additional \$1,500 fee each year.

If City Council's full eight-member body approves the ordinance next month, enforcement could begin on or before Dec. 1.

Contact Eric Lacy at (517) 377-1206 or elacy@lsj.com. Follow him on Twitter @EricLacy.

Abuse

Continued from Page 3A

dren, ages 7 and 1, police said.

After receiving the missing children report, police sent an emergency alert asking for the public's help in locating them, East Lansing Police Lt. Scott Wriggelsworth said. Another alert was sent a short time later, saying the children had been found.

"Our department feels that when we reach out for the public's and media's help in locating someone, it's important that the people we're asking for help get the follow-up information," he said.

Fourth-degree child abuse entails conduct that might put children at an unreasonable risk of harm, Wriggelsworth said.

Court records show that both women asked for court-appointed attorneys.

Contact Ken Palmer at (517) 377-1032 or kpalmer@lsj.com. Follow him on Twitter @KBPalm_lsj.



Manager Emily Gray takes a reservation for a dinner service at Gracie's Contemporary Bistro in Williamston.

Eatery

Continued from Page 3A

goat cheese potente and choice of vegetable

- » Pan seared rainbow trout with chickpea-lemon tahini, puree, basil oil, chef's rice and vegetable
- » Filet mignon
- » Shrimp and scallop ravioli
- » Venison meatloaf.

There also are smaller plates and a sandwich menu, such as a pasture burger and steak, chicken and eggplant sandwiches.

"We have only a couple of months of history but people are very receptive," Gavrilides said.

"We have a small menu but we're gotten a lot of compliments.

"People are really liking our crab bisque, and our New York strip, which we use caramelized bone marrow on."

The artistic food presentations at Gracie's will be different from those at the Soup Spoon, which Gavrilides describes as "very rustic."

The cozy bar area has the one high table, but the restaurant side has a dozen

tables for groups of different sizes. Outside there's a patio offering views of Williamston United Methodist Church and a quiet side street.

In all, the place seats about 75 people, Gavrilides said.

He said business started slow but it's picking up.

"We haven't done a ton of marketing because we like the word of mouth," he said. "We like friends to tell friends. People discover things."

Gavrilides has children in the Williamston school system but that's a not the reason he started a restaurant there. In fact, he said, a real estate firm approached him about it.

"My wife and I weighed it out carefully and we decided it was time for a second project," he said. "We thought this place had the right look and the right feel."

Danielle Bartshe, 30, of Lansing, has been a server at the Soup Spoon for five years and is helping Gracie's get established.

"It's a very nice place," she said. "There's fine dining for different special occasions."

Contact Curt Smith at (517) 377-1226 or csmith@lsj.com. Follow him on Twitter @CurtSmithLSJ.



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