

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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Press Release

DA Morrissey hosts regional leaders at Seminar on impact of new marijuana law



More than 160 regional public health, law enforcement, education and municipal leaders joined District Attorney Michael W. Morrissey at his "Marijuana Legalization – Community Strategies" seminar last week to learn about the public health, safety and governance issues and problems related to the new law.

"The ballot question was designed to maximize corporate profit, without regard for graceful or efficient implementation. That leaves towns and cities with a lot of unanswered questions," said District Attorney Morrissey, whose office organized the seminar in partnership with the Canton Alliance Against Substance Abuse, Needham Public Health, Walpole Police and Stoughton U-Knighted.

Attorney Katherine Laughman from the firm Kopelman & Paige led with a presentation on regulation and taxation of marijuana, including the steps towns need to take to regulate employees getting high at work – since marijuana will no longer be defined as a controlled substance – and ways to zone where pot shops can locate.

With an audience that was almost half police officers, Attorney John Scheft from Law Enforcement Dimensions detailed the intricacies of enforcing the new hodgepodge of law, where a citizen can grow 6 marijuana plants at their home legally, but to do so at a second home or rented space is a crime. A landscape where minors can be charged with possession for the marijuana inside their bodies after they consume it -- unlike any other drug.

Walpole Police Chief John Carmichael, whose personal research into the impacts marijuana legalization has included visiting Colorado manufacturing and selling facilities, and Needham Health and Human Services Director Timothy McDonald joined Scheft and Laughman to field questions from the group.

The Jan. 27 event, held at the headquarters for the Bank of Canton, drew police and fire chiefs, town planners, health directors, elected officials and a substantial number of substance abuse prevention and outreach workers.

"We may not have been able to answer every question for the towns, and there are many things that will be fleshed out through the courts in the years to come," District Attorney Morrissey said. "But if we pool our resources and work together, the coming changes can be less chaotic and less disruptive to public safety and quality of life."

