



**RALPH DLG. TORRES**  
Governor

**ARNOLD I. PALACIOS**  
Lieutenant Governor

COMMONWEALTH of the NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS  
**OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS  
CANNABIS COMMISSION

A meeting of the CNMI Cannabis Commission will be held on **Friday, January 29, 2021, at 10:30 A.M.** at the Office of the Commonwealth Cannabis Commission Conference Room located at Ascencion Ct., Bldg. 1341, Capitol Hill, Saipan.

AGENDA

- I. Call to Order
- II. Roll Call/Determination of Quorum
- III. Consideration and adoption of Agenda
- IV. Consideration and adoption of Minutes of prior meetings
- V. Public Comment
  
- VI. New Business
  1. Introduction to Board: Janina Maratita, Acting Managing Director
  2. Discussion on Medicinal Program
  3. Managing Director's Report
  
- VII. Adjournment

Copies of this notice and agenda have been posted at the Administration Building Entrance Hall, the House of Representatives Entrance Hall, and the Senate Entrance Hall.

Written comments on the agenda may be submitted to the CNMI Cannabis Commission, through the Office of the Governor or emailed to [info@cnmicannabis.org](mailto:info@cnmicannabis.org) on or before the meeting date. Oral testimony may be presented during the meeting on Friday, January 29, 2021.

**CNMI Cannabis Commission  
Regular Session Meeting Minutes  
January 29, 2021**

**I. Call to Order**

Chairwoman Nadine Deleon Guerrero called the CNMI Cannabis Commission's meeting to order at 10:30 a.m., which was held at the Office of the Commonwealth Cannabis Commission Conference Room located in Bldg. 1341, Ascencion Ct., Capitol Hill, Saipan.

**II. Roll Call/Determination of Quorum**

Chairwoman called roll of the commissioners:

Vice Chairman Matthew Deleon Guerrero, representing Saipan, was present;  
Secretary Journie Hofschneider, representing Tinian, was present (teleconference);  
Treasurer Valentino Taisacan, representing Northern Islands, was present;  
Member Thomas Songsong, representing Rota, was present (teleconference).

Chairwoman announced that all commissioners were present and confirmed quorum, and acknowledged the presence of Ms. Janina Maratita who was appointed as Acting Managing Director of the CNMI Cannabis Commission until the return of Managing Director Monique Sablan who is on personal leave. AAG Keisha Blaise's presence was also acknowledged.

**III. Consideration and adoption of Agenda**

Vice Chairman motioned to approve agenda, seconded by Treasurer; all commissioners voted in favor to adopt agenda, motion carried.

**IV. Consideration and adoption of Minutes of prior meetings**

Chairwoman mentioned that the Secretary provided the August 14, 2020 meeting minutes to all commissioners for review, which is up for adoption in today's meeting.

Secretary advised the Chairwoman of the pending minutes for the following meeting dates: September 4, 2020, September 18, 2020, September 25, 2020, October 29, 2020, November (unsure at this time), and December 10, 2020.

Vice Chairman motioned to approve the August 14, 2020 meeting minutes, seconded by Chairwoman; all commissioners voted in favor for its adoption, motion carried.

**V. Public Comment**

Chairwoman opened the floor for public comment. Treasurer verified common areas for any members of the public. Chairwoman later announced that no members of the public were present for public comment.

## **VI. New Business**

### **1. Introduction to Board: Janina Maratita, Acting Managing Director**

Chairwoman introduced Ms. Janina Maratita (Janina) who will be the acting managing director during Ms. Monique Sablan's absence, and that Janina continues to accept applications, including applications from the governor's mail room which should be contained in a sealed manila envelope and properly addressed to the commission.

Chairwoman additionally pointed out that everyone has been provided this information about Janina's role as acting managing director for the CNMI Cannabis Commission and that she may be contacted at 670-237-2200 if anyone has any questions. Chairwoman further added that the Commonwealth Casino Commission was notified and is aware that Janina is assigned to the governor's office and that all phone calls or emails are directed to that phone number or email. Chairwoman then opened the floor for Janina to discuss any issues or concerns she may have with her role as acting managing director.

Janina expressed that she has no official report at this time to offer the commission under the Managing Director's Report, but provided an overview of her activities which consisted of application receipts, communications with potential applicants and inquiries, information updates from documents received, and is familiarizing with the commission's operations and regulations. She is also in communication with Ms. Monique Sablan if clarification is needed on certain issues and thanked commission members for being helpful in addressing her inquiries. Janina continued that she would need the (DOA) as that is something the commission is working on, and asked if a commission letter head is available for the purpose of corresponding with applicants. Janina concluded by stating that she would be happy to answer any questions the commission may have. .

Vice Chairman asked Janina if the commission received any feedback about the transition (between Monique and Janina); if there were any complaints, primarily from existing applicants. Chairwoman answered that she is not aware of any complaints, and then Janina replied that there was a period of time that she did not have access to the commission's email, and when she finally did have access, she worked on figuring the answers to the email inquiries. Janina further explained that people have been following

up on their application and are wondering why they're not receiving responses, and that she'll address those inquiries as soon as possible.

Vice Chairman then asked Janina if she had a rough idea on how many potential applicants have been reaching out for information or expressing interests. Janina replied that she came across five (5) applicants and had five (5) inquiries, and individuals that expressed interest in participating in the cannabis industry were less than those previously mentioned applicants and inquires.

Chairwoman announced that the commission is moving into the Acting Managing Director's report since discussions are already in motion with Janina and the commission's administration.

Vice Chairman continued by asking Janina if she had any idea of when an application can be approved. Janina replied that she spoke with the Chairwoman and Secretary about the application approval processes and indicated that Managing Director Monique Sablan had comments and recommendations contained in applicant files, in which most of the recommendations called for the issuance of approval-in-principal letters to properly notify applicant(s) of any pending criteria needing to be fulfilled, i.e., documents to complete application package, which is why she asked if the commission has a commission letter head for her finalization and issuance of approval-in-principal correspondences as soon as possible.

Vice Chairman asked his next question if there were factors slowing down the application approval process, or any processes that may be slowing her down in reaching application approval within a reasonable time. Janina replied that it seems a majority of the delays stems from the applicant(s) not having complete documents as required by the specific application category, and that every applicant's file includes a check list which Monique filled identifying application completeness or documents pending, and added that three (3) applications are incomplete while all others are complete.

Vice Chairman asked Janina the application types of those three incomplete applications. Janina answered that she recalls the three were for producer licenses (class 1, 2 or 3). Vice Chairman replied that he is keeping informed on the zoning hearings on micro-producers to determine if there would be applicants for wholesaler licenses, then Janina responded that she has not come across any micro-producer applicant.

Vice Chairman then asked if there were any retailer applicant. Janina replied, "Yes!" Vice Chairman aired his view that it would be critical to get these retailer and producer applications through the approval processes as quickly as possible to stem any

unnecessary pressure to the organization and or to the commission's Managing Director Monique Sablan, and further added that she [Janina] may not be needing to make a lot of decisions at this point in time on behalf of Monique, it's about moving the applications along until Monique's return, and moving them as fast as she can.

Vice Chairman specified to Janina that there may be some applicants already going through the approval processes [with the commission or zoning authority] that have or may have incurred some fixed costs, e.g., rental, equipment purchases, etc., and as fast as we can get them to start generating revenue or get a handle on generating revenue would be ideal. Vice Chairman further stated that the commission initially did not have a timeline as it worked through its regulations, but now it does and needs to approve applications within a reasonable timeframe to initiate revenue generation.

Janina agreed with Vice Chairman and asked for the commission's support and guidance as she furthers her familiarization with the commission's processes and regulations while moving existing applications towards full approval/licensure.

Vice Chairman brought up the issue of *appeals* with the Chairwoman in which the commission would formulate, Chairwoman agreed.

Vice Chairman then asked Janina if there were any applications under the homegrown registry. Janina replied having received two (2) applications. In terms of the homegrown registry, the Vice Chairman asked if there was an ongoing relationship with the registry and the feds; "when we receive an application, do we submit that to...on homegrown...I know there's another issue, but regular licensure?" Janina asked for a repeat of the question. Vice Chairman asked if the homegrown registry/application required a license from the DEA; he continued that at one time there seemed to have been discussion on this issue, not sure, but is that discussion ongoing or is there discussion on this relationship? Janina (or the AAG) replied "no!"

Chairwoman asked if there were any questions or other issues to discuss, and then asked the Tinian and Rota commissioners if they had anything to add. The Secretary mentioned that Tinian has an individual interested in a micro-producer license and the other was for a lounge but its operation is planned for Saipan. Member Songsong reported that he has been reporting weekly application activity to the managing director showing no activity, no applications received except that one homegrown licensee, basically zero activity and not looking good for Rota so far. Vice Chairman added that Saipan will be the principal concept showcasing management, operations, how things are done, and if we can do it well here then that could open a lot of opportunities for Rota and Tinian.

Hearing no further question/discussion, Chairwoman announced moving on to the next agenda item.

## **2. Discussion on Medicinal Program**

Chairwoman opened by mentioning that in relation to the medicinal program, an interested investor in establishing a cannabis inspection/testing laboratory inquired whether the commission had formulated regulations for laboratory license. She mentioned to them that the commission recently submitted its laboratory regulations to the attorney general's office for review/endorsement, which should be routed shortly for publication in the NMI registry and public commenting period.

Chairwoman opened the floor to discuss the medicinal program, and held that in her view and reasoning behind holding off on the medicinal marijuana program regulation was for the fact that there is no existing certified and licensed laboratory to conduct the necessary inspection and safety testing of marijuana flowers or products by which physicians may be issuing recommendations for the medicinal use of marijuana.

Chairwoman continued that in the meantime, the Vice Chairman brought up an idea where the medicinal marijuana program could be launched through the homegrown registry where personal use home growers who are able to obtain a physician's recommendation for medicinal marijuana use would be allowed to grow additional marijuana plants than normally allowed or limited under the original homegrown registry. The idea is to begin formulating some form of structure behind the medicinal marijuana program beginning with the personal use home growers who are able to obtain a physician's recommendation.

Vice Chairman added that a working draft will be offered in the next commission meeting for review and discussion; it sets acceptable credentials for providing recommendations for medicinal marijuana use, allowable standards and eligibility criteria under the medicinal marijuana program through the homegrown registry.

Chairwoman asked if there were any questions or issues needing further discussion on the medicinal program, and stated that the information presented is what she wanted to initially discuss for the possible launching of the medicinal program for the personal use home grower, and not necessarily having to wait for a laboratory to establish to launch the commercialized medicinal marijuana program.

Vice Chairman indicated that one situation he views as possibly problematic in that framework under the medicinal marijuana program is that the commission has no means

of control if a physician is adhering to the proper procedure because the Commission does not license physicians, not our thing or specialization, and that it may be helpful to discuss about allowances provided by the commission to them, or another licensing process or procedure that would allow the professional licensing board to monitor certain physicians, not for purposes of permitting them but for purposes of holding them accountable for their actions once physicians are allowed to issue recommendations for the medicinal use of marijuana.

Secretary asked if this would include stateside physician recommendations. Vice Chairman suggested that the commission could accept the validity period of that previous or stateside physician recommendation, as recommendations may have to be renewed.

Chairwoman stated that the commission will continue its discussion on its medicinal marijuana program in depth in its next meeting, and that she wanted to open the floor today to get everyone thinking about the program's development.

### **3. Managing Director's Report**

Moved up to New Business, agenda item VI (1).

## **VII. Adjournment**

Hearing no further discussion or questions, the Chairwoman offered a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Treasurer. Chairwoman announced that she'll notify the commissioners on its next scheduled meeting date for February 2021.

All commissioners voted in favor of the Chairwoman's motion to adjourn meeting, motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 11:26 a.m.