



Local Community Mitigation Advisory Committee Region B

Date/Time: October 13, 2020 at 1:30 p.m.

**Place: VIA CONFERENCE CALL NUMBER: 1 646 741 5292
PARTICIPANT CODE: 112 751 3450**

Members Present:

Jennifer Bonfiglio- Agawam
Samuel Darkwa-West Springfield
Alison Ebner- Chamber of Commerce
Carmina Fernandes-Ludlow
Mary McNally- East Longmeadow

Ellen Patashnick- Human Service Provider
Bellamy Schmidt- Holyoke
Richard Sullivan- Regional Development
Org.
Lori Tanner- Regional Planning Agency

Joseph Delaney, Community Affairs Chief
José Delgado, MGM Dir. Governmental
Affairs

Bruce Stebbins, MGC Commissioner
Tania Perez, MGC Admin./Project Assistant
Mary Thurlow, MGC Program Manager

Call to Order

Mr. Delaney called the Local Community Mitigation Advisory Committee (“Committee”) meeting to order. He then asked the new members Mr. Darkwa and Mr. Sullivan to introduce themselves.

Given the unprecedented circumstances resulting from the global Coronavirus pandemic, Governor Charles Baker issued an order to provide limited relief from certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law to protect the health and safety of individuals interested in attending public meetings. In keeping with the guidance provided, the Local Community Mitigation Advisory Committee will conduct a public meeting utilizing remote collaboration technology.

Approval of Minutes

Ms. Bonfiglio moved to approve the minutes from the Committee meeting of November 19, 2019, subject to correction for typographical errors and other nonmaterial matters. Ms. Fernandes seconded the motion. After making a small correction, a roll call vote was taken.

Roll Call Vote:

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------|--------------------------------|
| <i>Ms. Bonfiglio:</i> | <i>Aye.</i> | <i>Ms. Tanner: Abstained.</i> |
| <i>Ms. McNally:</i> | <i>Aye.</i> | <i>Ms. Ebner:Aye.</i> |
| <i>Mr. Schmidt:</i> | <i>Aye.</i> | <i>Mr. Sullivan Abstained.</i> |
| <i>Ms. Fernandes:</i> | <i>Aye.</i> | <i>Ms. Patashnick: Aye.</i> |
| <i>Ms. Theocles:</i> | <i>Aye.</i> | <i>The motion passed 8:0:2</i> |
| <i>Mr. Darkwa:</i> | <i>Aye.</i> | |

Election of Chair and Representative to the Subcommittee

[6:50](#) Mr. Delaney asked for volunteers to be the Chair for this Committee. Mr. Darkwa volunteered. Mr. Sullivan seconded the nomination.

Roll Call Vote:

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|-----------------------|-------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>Ms. Bonfiglio:</i> | <i>Aye.</i> | <i>Mr. Darkwa:</i> | <i>Aye.</i> |
| <i>Ms. McNally:</i> | <i>Aye.</i> | <i>Ms. Tanner:</i> | <i>Abstained.</i> |
| <i>Mr. Schmidt:</i> | <i>Aye.</i> | <i>Ms. Ebner:</i> | <i>Aye.</i> |
| <i>Ms. Fernandes:</i> | <i>Aye.</i> | <i>Mr. Sullivan:</i> | <i>Aye.</i> |
| <i>Ms. Theocles:</i> | <i>Aye.</i> | <i>Ms. Patashnick:</i> | <i>Aye.</i> |
| | | | <i>The motion passed 9:0:1.</i> |

Mr. Delaney asked for volunteers to represent the Committee to the Subcommittee on Community Mitigation (“Subcommittee”). Ms. Bonfiglio stated that she did not mind continuing to serve in this role. Ms. Fernandes moved to nominate Ms. Bonfiglio. Mr. Sullivan seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

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|-----------------------|-------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>Ms. Bonfiglio:</i> | <i>Aye.</i> | <i>Ms. Tanner:</i> | <i>Abstained.</i> |
| <i>Ms. McNally:</i> | <i>Aye.</i> | <i>Ms. Ebner:</i> | <i>Aye.</i> |
| <i>Mr. Schmidt:</i> | <i>Aye.</i> | <i>Mr. Sullivan:</i> | <i>Aye.</i> |
| <i>Ms. Fernandes:</i> | <i>Aye.</i> | <i>Ms. Patashnick:</i> | <i>Aye.</i> |
| <i>Ms. Theocles:</i> | <i>Aye.</i> | | <i>The motion passed 9:0:1.</i> |
| <i>Mr. Darwka:</i> | <i>Aye.</i> | | |

Discussion of Policy Questions

“Should the 2021 CMF continue to be used to support and leverage resources to help residents of the Springfield or Everett areas obtain their high school or work readiness credentials to be eligible for employment?”

Mr. Delaney moved on to the 2021 policy questions for the Committee’s consideration. He gave background information on the Community Mitigation Fund (“CMF”) for the benefit of the new members. Mr. Delaney went through the over 20 policy questions up for review, providing context for each. Regarding the question of workforce training funding, Ms. Fernandes stated that it made sense to have large amounts granted for this purpose at the beginning of a casino opening, but that over time perhaps the amount should be reduced because of the presumed lower need. Mr. Delaney pointed out that with restaurants and casinos closed due to the pandemic, these hospitality workforce training programs may prove to be less necessary. Ms. Patashnick asked to clarify whether the amount of money decided for workforce training was a flexible amount. Mr. Delaney answered that everything is waivable by the Massachusetts Gaming Commission (“Commission”). Ms. Bonfiglio agreed it was a good idea to redirect funds from the hospitality workforce training program but keep some. Mr. Sullivan suggested that with the high turnover rate in the hospitality industry, it was a good idea to keep some funding for these programs. Ms. Ebner inquired about information MGM might have regarding their current workforce and what areas they are anticipating will grow. Mr. Delaney talked about how many employees are currently working at MGM compared to how many they had before the pandemic, and which restaurants in the casino are currently open. Mr. Delgado informed the Committee about MGM staff numbers, where staff is needed, and what functions of the casino are not currently operating.

“Should the Commission continue to allow funding to pay for a portion of the construction costs of transportation projects? Should the Commission cap the percentage of construction costs that the CMF will fund?”

Mr. Delaney moved onto the next item regarding whether the fund should pay for a portion of construction costs for transportation projects and whether the CMF Committee should impose a cap on the percentage of construction costs an award goes towards. Ms. Theocles commented that there should be no cap. Ms. Bonfiglio suggested that there should be a local match for these projects, but no cap. Ms. Fernandes agreed with Ms. Bonfiglio. Mr. Sullivan suggested, if necessary, a possible cap of up to 50%, but also agreed that there should be a local match. Mr. Darkwa pointed out that there are funds available outside the CMF for these types of projects, so there should be a local match. Ms. Theocles agreed with Mr. Sullivan’s earlier suggestion of a cap, and that it should be left to the applying community to decide how much of a local match they secure. Mr. Delaney reminded everyone that these guidelines are waivable by the Commission, and not strict rules. He added that most of the transportation-related impacts from casinos require reworking intersections and other traffic adjustments. Mr. Darkwa commented that there are more pressing issues to mitigate in these communities than traffic, especially since there are other sources of funding for these types of projects.

“Should the Commission consider the creation of an emergency reserve within the Community Mitigation Fund for unknown impacts that arise after February 1, 2021?”

Mr. Delaney moved on to the question of an emergency reserve for emergency situations. If unused, the fixed emergency money amount would roll over to the next year. Ms. Patashnick supported establishing an emergency fund. Mr. Sullivan agreed but added that the amount should be allowed to grow each year. Ms. Theocles and Ms. Ebner agreed with Mr. Sullivan. The following items were the question of reimbursing public safety costs, continuing to set aside funds for a possible tribal casino, and whether there should be a dollar-for-dollar match required for every project.

“Should the Commission place a time limit for the use of previously authorized reserves for the 2021 Community Mitigation Fund program?”

On the issue of whether there should be a time limit for using or committing unused initial casino opening reserves, Ms. Bonfiglio stated that there should be a limit, and that some communities may not be aware that they have unused reserves. Ms. Patashnick reminded the Committee that they had previously discussed setting that time limit to one year. Mr. Sullivan remarked that if communities had not immediately used the reserve funds, they probably did not need them, therefore unspent reserves should be given back to the CMF. Ms. Theocles and Mr. Darkwa agreed.

Next were the issues of authorizing funding for non-transportation planning in communities that have spent their reserves and whether the CMF should fund administrative costs for workforce development projects, whether CMF money should go to private parties, whether to continue allowing joint applications between communities, and limiting communities to only one specific impact grant.

“Should the Commission consider additional funding for the Hampden County Sheriff’s Office for lease assistance?”

On the question of whether to continue assisting the Hampden County sheriff's office with their lease for the Western Massachusetts Alcohol Corrections Center, Mr. Sullivan commented that they could have found an alternative office space by now, so he disfavors assisting them further. Ms. Theocles added that they should re-apply for another grant but that the CMF should not assist with their lease. Ms. McNally agreed that they should have found another space to lease and that the CMF should not assist them further. Mr. Darkwa pointed out that if the center cannot demonstrate an increased enrollment as a result of the casino, their request for continued funding is inappropriate. Ms. Bonfiglio agreed with Mr. Darkwa. Mr. Delaney presented the possibility of weaning the office off CMF money. Ms. Patashnick supported that idea, citing the probable increased need for the center due to the currently difficult economy.

Next was the issue of rescinding previously awarded grants that had not been spent, and whether communities should be allowed to apply to more than one category of grant for the same project. Mr. Delaney also provided some criteria the CMF Committee uses to evaluate applications and thanked the Committee for their input.

Discussion of 2021 Community Mitigation Fund Guidelines

Mr. Delaney asked the Committee to review the 2021 CMF draft guidelines for the next meeting, instead of discussing them at the current one. Ms. Thurlow reminded the Committee that the guidelines will be open to public comment after the Commission meeting next week.

Mr. Delaney brought up a question raised by Mr. Schmidt about impacts of the pandemic on casino reopening and operations. Mr. Delaney explained that the biggest impact of the pandemic on casinos has been their employment numbers. He added that some operations had ceased at casinos, such as Plainridge Park Casino's restaurants, MGM's reduced capacity gaming floor due to enforcing appropriate distances between patrons, reduced hotel hours at Encore, and reduced functions. Mr. Delaney also went over gaming revenue made in the month after reopening compared to revenue from the month before the pandemic and found that the casinos each made about 80% of the revenue they did during the month before they shut down. He reminded the Committee that the CMF relies on those gaming revenues. Commissioner Stebbins added that the Commission recently allowed MGM and Encore to reopen their roulette tables. Ms. Tanner wondered how many of those initial reopening patrons were frequent high revenue-generating patrons compared to casual players. Commissioner Stebbins stated that perhaps player card information could help answer that question. He also mentioned the Commission has an upcoming meeting to discuss MGM research and performance, and he offered to send an invite the Committee.

Discussion of Next Steps

Ms. Thurlow reminded the Committee to review the guidelines for discussion at the next meeting. Mr. Delaney reminded the Committee that written comments can be sent to Ms. Thurlow, himself, or Ms. Perez.

With no further business, Mr. Delaney moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Schmidt seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

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|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Ms. Bonfiglio:</i> | <i>Aye.</i> | <i>Mr. Darkwa:</i> | <i>Aye.</i> |
| <i>Ms. McNally:</i> | <i>(no response).</i> | <i>Ms. Tanner:</i> | <i>Aye.</i> |
| <i>Mr. Schmidt:</i> | <i>Aye.</i> | <i>Ms. Ebner:</i> | <i>(no response).</i> |
| <i>Ms. Fernandes:</i> | <i>(no response).</i> | <i>Mr. Sullivan:</i> | <i>Aye.</i> |
| <i>Ms. Theocles:</i> | <i>Aye.</i> | <i>Ms. Patashnick:</i> | <i>Aye.</i> |

The motion passed 7:0. Ms. McNally, Ms. Fernandes, and Ms. Ebner had already left the meeting.

List of Documents and Other Items Used

1. 2021 Community Mitigation Fund Policy Questions
2. 2021 Community Mitigation Fund Guidelines
3. 10/13/2020 Local Community Mitigation Advisory Committee Region B notice of meeting and agenda
4. 11/19/2019 Local Community Mitigation Advisory Committee Region B meeting minutes

/s/ Tania J. Perez
Secretary