



Subcommittee on Addiction Services Meeting Minutes

October 14, 2021

PRESENT: Meg Mainzer- Cohen, GPAC Chair
Victor Ortiz
Mark Vander Linden
Rodolfo Vega
Marlene Warner
Yoyo Yau

1:03 p.m. CALL TO ORDER

The Gaming Policy Advisory Committee (GPAC) chair Meg Mainzer-Cohen opened this first meeting of the Subcommittee on Addiction Services, welcoming all of the new members. She alerted members that the subcommittee constitutes a public body and is therefore subject to open meeting laws.

Ms. Mainzer-Cohen recognized that the Subcommittee on Addiction Services is one of several subcommittees of the GPAC, governed by statute, referencing that the statutory language was included in the meeting packet. She noted that the Massachusetts Gaming Commission (MGC) provides the administrative support for these meetings and aides in ensuring compliance.

1:08 p.m. COMMITTEE INTRODUCTIONS

Ms. Mainzer- Cohen acknowledged that all members bios had been included in the meeting packet, but opened the floor for formal introductions.

Mark Vander Linden stated he was selected as MGC's representative. He also described his background which included research and a range of clinical experience, focusing on health issues involving research and policy.

Victor Ortiz of the Director of Office of Problem Gambling Services represents the Department of Public Health which he has been with for over 5 years directing and leading public health response. Mr. Ortiz has also been a social worker for 30 years. His life work has been centered on promoting equity and addressing disparities. He stated he additionally has clinical service experience, specifically in gambling. Mr. Ortiz also serves on the GPAC.

Rodolfo (Rudy) Vega, appointed by the Governor's office, stated that as a Mexican from Puerto Rico, he has worked with communities of color all throughout the United States. He is president of the board of directors and chair of the Lynn Community Health Center. He has done significant research and evaluation for health and human services programs, especially in the fields of HIV/AIDS, substance abuse and mental health.

Marlene Warner is the Executive Director of the MA Council on Gaming and Health, and has been with the council for 20 years. She described the nonprofit's work as ranging full spectrum from prevention to recovery and advocacy, making sure policies are sound and based on research. Ms. Warner described her specialization as an intersection of health and communications.

Man Yung (YoYo) Yau was also appointed by the Governor's office. Ms. Yau is Chief Program Officer at Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center and stated the organization sees community issues related to gambling which are not just individual, but also family and community impacts. Ms. Yau is educated in mental health counseling, with a background in brain injuries and also has a Bachelors degree in social work from Hong Kong. Her expertise focuses on substance abuse's impact on brain development.

After the introductions, Ms. Mainzer-Cohen turned the meeting over to the MGC's General Counsel.

1:19 p.m. DISCUSSION REGARDING STATUTORY MISSION

General Counsel, Todd Grossman stated that this body was established by section 68 of chapter 23K. He confirmed that the Subcommittee on Addiction Services is one of three subcommittees under the GPAC, which is comprised of 15 members (of which there are currently 12). It is required to meet at least once annually. Mr. Grossman specified that this particular body is comprised of 5 members, with the mission is somewhat more narrowed in focus than the GPAC, and is designed to make recommendations relative to regulations the Commission may be interested in promulgating. He clarified that the statute's directive is to develop recommendations for regulation and that MGC's legal team stands by to assist the subcommittee in that work.

Mr. Grossman explained that the subcommittee was subject to the Open Meeting Law, meaning that there has to be a quorum of three members in order to conduct any business. He specified that if there were less than three members, the subcommittee can still talk and meet but can't conduct official business, such as voting on meeting minutes. Additionally, he explained that the members can't speak about matters related to this body with more than three members present because that would violate the law under chapter 30A. Mr. Grossman also explained that 48 hours notice to the public is required for a quorum of body to meet in order to take any action, and that meeting minutes must be developed, reviewed and posted for each meeting. He provided some brief information about what constitutes a meeting under the Open Meeting Law, how violations could arise, some email considerations and certain exemptions related to the subcommittee.

Next, Mr. Grossman discussed the Conflict of Interest law and its application to the subcommittee, confirming that GPAC and subcommittee members are considered "special" state employees as a member of this body. He explained that for municipal employees, the law is a little different and described that. He specified that the Conflict of Interest law requires that members receive a summary of state conflict of interest law annually, and are required to acknowledge receipt of that and the completion of an ethics training every other year. Mr. Grossman specified that he and his team at MGC are available to answer questions, or they can be addressed to the state's ethics commission. Mr. Grossman indicated that he would perform a brief overview and training which is more specific to the subcommittee members at their next meeting.

Mr. Ortiz had a question around how these laws would impact vendor contracting opportunities if they came up as a result of the recommendations. Mr. Grossman specified that no member should participate in conversations here where they or any member of their family have a financial interest. He indicated that an individual in that case should recuse themselves, but that in some cases, a written letter may be necessary. He clarified that the most important component is always flagging any potential conflict and recognizing it before entering into discussion, recognizing that members may also have an interest as part of their day job. Mr. Grossman also stressed the importance of having a general understanding of the concept of “divided loyalties.”

Mr. Vander Linden asked if there was any guidance about the frequency that the subcommittee should meet. Mr. Grossman stated that the law does not specifically address that and advised that the group meeting at least once per year (which is specified as the minimum for the GPAC.)

1:50 p.m. GOVERNANCE

Ms. Mainzer-Cohen resumed the agenda and stated that as an important part of governance for the subcommittee, they needed to elect a Chair. She offered her personal experience as Chair of the GPAC, stating that she has the opportunity to be on the front lines, working in tandem with the Gaming Commission, creating the meeting agenda, determining the meeting frequency and leading the meetings.

Ms. Warner formally nominated Mark Vander Linden as chair of the subcommittee, to which Mr. Ortiz offered his support and all committee members voted in favor. Ms. Mainzer-Cohen then formally turned the meeting over to the new Subcommittee Chair, Mr. Vander Linden.

1:56 p.m. NEXT STEPS/OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Vander Linden posed that the subcommittee discuss the frequency of these meetings. It was decided to revisit that topic at the next meeting, where the subcommittee could take a deeper look at the intersect of responsible gaming and problem gambling especially related to addiction services, within the existing statute. Ms. Warner indicated that they should also examine the third party exclusion topic on that agenda, as well. The subcommittee determined they would reconvene within two months.

2:00 p.m. MEETING ADJOURNED