



Massachusetts Gaming Commission Meeting Minutes

Date/Time: October 29, 2024, 1:15 p.m.

Place: Marilyn Rodman Performing Arts Center
One School Street
Foxborough, MA 02035

On October 29, 2024, the Massachusetts Gaming Commission (“Commission”) participated in a discussion highlighting the Commission’s Community Mitigation Fund and the Foxborough Plainville Wrentham Regional Marketing Initiative. To comply with the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law, the discussion was noticed as a public meeting. The meeting was held in person and was not conducted using remote or livestream technology. However, a recording of the meeting was uploaded to MassGaming.com and the Commission’s YouTube channel.

Commissioners Present:

Chair Jordan Maynard
Commissioner Eileen O’Brien
Commissioner Nakisha Skinner

1. [Call to Order](#) (00:06)

Chair Jordan Maynard called to order the 538th Public Meeting of the Massachusetts Gaming Commission (“Commission”). Roll call attendance was conducted, and Commissioners O’Brien and Skinner were present for the meeting.

Chair Maynard stated that this discussion was going to be held as a public meeting due to the presence of more than two Commissioners. He noted that the meeting was not being livestreamed and stated that a recording would be uploaded to the Commission’s website after the meeting. Chair Maynard introduced the attending Commissioners: Commissioner O’Brien and Commissioner Skinner. He noted that Commissioner Hill sent his regards but was unable to attend due to a prior personal engagement.

Chair Maynard then introduced Michael Bobbitt, whom he described as a long-time friend and the leader of the Mass Cultural Council, who works with the highest integrity and the highest enthusiasm to improve the arts in Massachusetts. Chair Maynard highlighted their past collaborations and acknowledged Mr. Bobbitt’s significant work in the arts. Mr. Bobbitt congratulated Chair Maynard on his official appointment as Chair by the Governor. He thanked the Commissioners as well as the Massachusetts Senators and Representatives in attendance for

their support of the creative and cultural sector. Mr. Bobbitt concluded his remarks by providing an overview of the Foxborough Plainville Wrentham Regional Marketing Initiative and introducing Ms. Rachel Benson, Director of Planning and Economic Development in Wrentham.

2. [Overview of Foxborough, Plainville and Wrentham Regional Marketing Initiative](#) (03:48)

Ms. Benson presented an overview of the Regional Marketing Initiative, a collaborative effort between the towns of Plainville, Foxborough, and Wrentham, generously funded by the Commission. She emphasized that the plan aimed to elevate the local economy, drive tourism, and create long-term benefits for the communities. Ms. Benson highlighted the unique assets of each town: Foxborough with Gillette Stadium for sports and entertainment; Wrentham with one of the largest outdoor outlet malls in New England (Wrentham Village Premium Outlets); and Plainville with Plainridge Park Casino offering gaming, racing, and dining. She stated that these destinations together formed a strong regional attraction amplified by the marketing plan. The initiative, started in 2019, was about building a sustainable future through cooperation and shared growth.

Christine Pappas, President of Open the Door Inc., and a destination marketing expert with 35 years of experience, explained the implementation of the marketing strategy. She shared her excitement about the opportunity provided by the Commission's funding, which allowed for the creation of tools like a website and marketing materials to effectively promote the region. She stated that the initial intent in 2019 was to prepare for the FIFA World Cup in 2026. The goal was to boost economic activity in the three towns by driving overnight stays, increasing revenue for businesses and tax revenue for the towns and the Commonwealth.

Ms. Pappas detailed the branding efforts, including the logo, color palette (evocative of New England fall and summer colors), and typography designed to allow for individuality while maintaining balance across the three towns. She explained that the standards were created to ensure consistent use of assets. Ms. Pappas showcased various iterations of the logo with different colors, hashtags, website addresses, and background imagery.

Ms. Pappas reported that initial results show website engagement with 14,000 users in the past three months and over 40,000 users in the previous two fiscal years. Posts and media sharing events and itineraries received the most views. She shared that hotel tax collections in the region have increased from \$1.8 million in FY 2018 to \$2.4 million in FY 2023. She concluded by stating that future plans included targeted advertising campaigns for the holiday season and spring/summer, search engine marketing, geo-fencing, sales strategy implementation targeting tour operators and meeting planners, and continued development of marketing assets.

3. [Panel Discussion](#) (19:41)

Chair Maynard stated that a panel discussion, aimed to showcase a cross-section of small business owners in the region would occur next. He introduced Paige Duncan, an early member of the Regional Marketing Initiative for Foxborough, Plainville, and Wrentham, who was going to moderate the panel. The panelists included Stephen Bradford, VP of Marketing at Plainridge Park Casino; Rob Garrigan, Partner at Union Straw Restaurant; Deb Sundon, representing An

Unlikely Story Bookstore; Allyson Renault, Owner of Ally's Cookies; and Catherine Miller, Executive Director of the Marilyn Rodman Performing Arts Center.

The panel discussed inspirations for starting their businesses, challenges faced (such as the amount of work and unexpected issues), the supportive nature of the local communities, the positive impact of An Unlikely Story on Plainville, the ways in which Plainridge Park Casino engages with the three towns and opportunities for future collaboration, the rewards of running a business in a small town, and initiatives taken by the Performing Arts Center to build a vibrant community.

Ms. Benson explained the vision for the fully realized marketing initiative, including potential for a self-sustaining organization with an executive director to oversee promotion and outreach. She highlighted the challenge of small businesses lacking the time and resources for marketing efforts and suggested future support in areas like web design and marketing.

4. [Discussion and Questions](#) (42:10)

During the question and answer portion of the panel, an audience member inquired about how citizens could best support local businesses. Panelists suggested a combination of word-of-mouth, social media, and highlighting businesses each week, as well as supporting local events. The "shop local" message and its impact on the local economy was emphasized by many panelists. Ms. Renault, from Ally's Cookies, specifically highlighted that hosting events on the common or elsewhere helps draw people in and addresses accessibility/parking challenges that can make it difficult for some people to visit store fronts directly.

Catherine Miller discussed how state funding through the Mass Cultural Council and the Cultural Facilities Fund has been crucial for the Marilyn Rodman Performing Arts Center, enabling significant renovations and an increase in the organization's economic impact. She also highlighted successful local fundraising efforts. Ms. Miller added that the Commission's grant opportunities through the Mass Cultural Council helped local venues like the Performing Arts Center bring in larger acts they may not otherwise be able to afford.

A question was raised by an audience member about coordination for the upcoming Semi-Quincentennial in 2026, noting the expected large crowds anticipated in the Boston area. Ms. Benson confirmed that discussions were beginning on the committee she was a part of and that they were looking for ways to spread activities across the Commonwealth.

In response to a question about which tourism market has seen the most growth (local, regional, national, or international), Ms. Pappas stated that the most growth has been local and regional so far, but efforts were starting to target national and international business, such as tour operators and meeting planners.

Chair Maynard opened the floor to Representative Marcus Vaughn and Senator Paul Feeny for remarks. Representative Vaughn of Wrentham offered thanks to everyone involved, acknowledging the benefits of the Commission and the Mass Cultural Council grants in his district and others.

Senator Feeny praised the collaborative spirit among the towns and the potential for exponential growth through regionalization. He stated that the towns could achieve scale together that individual communities could not. He also highlighted the readiness of the region for major events like the FIFA World Cup in 2026, despite the challenges businesses face. He specifically thanked the Commission and Director Bobbitt for managing funds effectively.

Chair Maynard reiterated the significance of the Community Mitigation Fund, noting that \$670,000 had been given to this specific regional marketing project since 2019 and approximately \$10 million overall from the Fund had been dispersed in recent years for various projects. He emphasized the importance of continued funding from the state to ensure ongoing project success, and thanked Joe Delaney, Lily Wallace and Mary Thurlow from the Community Affairs Division.

5. [Commissioner Updates](#) (1:05:34)

Commissioner Skinner expressed her gratitude to the panelists for sharing their perspectives and stories. She acknowledged the great work being done for the communities by the Community Affairs Division and supported the continued efforts of the community members.

Commissioner O'Brien reiterated the statements made by Commissioner Skinner and Chair Maynard. She expressed that she was really excited to be able to see the progress on the Marilyn Rodman Performing Arts Center and what it is becoming. She added that seeing the Community Mitigation Fund dollars in action and witnessing their ripple effect in the community was really uplifting and one of the best parts of her role as a Commissioner. She thanked the panelists for taking time out of their busy schedules and the representatives for their work on the Hill.

6. [Other Business](#) (1:09:36)

Hearing no other business, Chair Maynard requested a motion to adjourn.

Commissioner O'Brien moved to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Skinner.

Roll call vote:

Commissioner O'Brien: Aye.

Commissioner Skinner: Aye.

Chair Maynard: Aye.

The motion passed unanimously, 3-0. Meeting adjourned.

List of Documents and Other Items Used

1. [Notice of Meeting and Agenda](#) dated October 24, 2024