



Massachusetts Gaming Commission Meeting Minutes

Date/Time: October 3, 2024, 11:00 a.m.

Place: International Institute of New England, 2 Boylston Street, 3rd Floor
Conference Room, Boston, MA 02116

The Commission participated in a tour of two program sites of the Metro Boston Regional Hospitality Consortium and participated in a discussion highlighting the Commission's Community Mitigation Fund. To comply with the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law, the discussion portion of the visit was noticed as a public meeting. This meeting was held in person and was not livestreamed. However, a recording of the meeting was uploaded to MassGaming.com and the Commission's YouTube channel.

Commissioners Present:

Interim Chair Jordan Maynard
Commissioner Eileen O'Brien
Commissioner Bradford Hill
Commissioner Nakisha Skinner

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

Interim Chair Maynard called to order the 535th Public Meeting of the Massachusetts Gaming Commission ("Commission"). Roll call attendance was not conducted because the meeting was held in person. All four commissioners were present for the meeting.

2. [Metro Boston Regional Hospitality Consortium Showcase](#) (01:35)

a. [Overview of MassHire Metro North Workforce Board](#) (01:39)

Interim Chair Maynard introduced Chris Albrizio-Lee, who serves as President and Chief Executive Officer of the MassHire Metro North Workforce Board ("MassHire"). President and CEO Albrizio-Lee thanked their partners and provided background on the Consortium. He noted that the ultimate goal is to invest in local communities which were most impacted by the casino, particularly around workforce development, and to create a pipeline to hospitality jobs. President and CEO Albrizio-Lee then turned it over to Penny Hasseli, who serves as the Chief Operating

Officer for MassHire. She highlighted the critical role that the Community Mitigation Fund (“CMF”) has had in helping the labor market recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and how the CMF has been a lifeline for their partner organizations over the past seven years. COO Hasseli summarized some high-level outcomes as a result of funding received from the CMF, including 518 job placements. She noted that a potential fallout of not continuing to invest in the CMF is a disruption in the recovery of the hospitality industry and asked the Commission to continue to advocate for continued investment in the CMF.

COO Hasseli turned it over to Rashad Cope, who serves as the Deputy Chief of the City of Boston’s Worker Empowerment Cabinet and the Office of Youth Employment and Opportunity. He expressed his agency’s continued strong support for sustained investment in the CMF. Deputy Chief Cope emphasized that all residents in Boston have access to quality job training and opportunities across all sectors, including hospitality. He noted that the City of Boston has been able to leverage the funding received by directly supporting organizations.

b. [Presentation by BEST Hospitality](#) (10:24)

Lori Sylvia, Apprenticeship Director at BEST Hospitality (“BEST”), summarized the impact that the CMF has had on their community members and the hotel industry. She explained that BEST has two sides of the house: they provide training services to community members who need new skills to enter the hotel industry through their job seeker programs, and they’re also the education provider for Unite Here Local 26, which is the union for hospitality workers in Greater Boston.

Director Sylvia highlighted that since 2018, the CMF has enabled them to support 284 diverse community members mainly through their job seeker program and that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the CMF allowed them to offer courses in English to displaced workers for hospitality, technology, and COVID safety in the workplace as well as career readiness workshops to prepare them to re-enter the industry when hotels reopened. Director Sylvia highlighted that the CMF supported two of their job seeker programs this year: the Introduction to Hospitality Pre-Apprenticeship Program and their new Culinary Training Program.

She noted that in FY24, 472 people applied for the Introduction to Hospitality Pre-Apprenticeship Program with public and private funding, including with funding from the CMF. Director Sylvia mentioned that 74% of those who came to BEST were unemployed and 83 of them relied on public assistance. She noted that 89% of those who attended BEST programs graduated and 81% of them secured a union hotel job with an average wage of \$28.20 per hour, which was met with applause from the audience. Director Sylvia noted that this has been lifechanging for these 68 individuals and their families.

Director Sylvia then introduced one of BEST’s graduates. The graduate told her immigration story from Haiti and how BEST Hospitality’s Introduction to Hospitality Apprenticeship Program changed her life.

c. [Presentation by Action for Equity](#) (21:16)

Tarshia Green-Williams, Deputy Director of Action for Equity, explained that the organization is a coalition based in the Boston area. She thanked the Commission and the CMF for their continued support. Deputy Director Green-Williams noted that gaming was always intended to create an economic benefit for the residents of the Commonwealth and not just pull money from people to give to the casino companies. She explained their community advocacy work, including the first pilot of their Community Pipeline to Quality Jobs, which reached over 2,000 residents of color across Greater Boston and resulted in 800 residents being hired in jobs. Deputy Director Green-Williams affirmed that she believed that the CMF was part of the funding infrastructure of the gaming industry that allows the industry to meet the economic goals built into the law to achieve value-based purposes as it was intended.

d. [Presentation by Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center](#) (25:31)

Stephen Hunter, Director of Adult Education at Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center (“BCNC”), provided a history of his organization. He noted that BCNC has proudly served the Greater Boston Asian and immigrant communities since 1969, and they continue to empower over 13,000 individuals each year through education, family support, arts, and stronger communities by offering opportunities that help their participants achieve economic self-sufficiency.

Director Hunter spoke about one of their key programs called CustomerFIRST, which is a free training program for intermediate-advanced English language learners seeking full-time entry-level employment in the customer service industry. He noted that CustomerFIRST is funded in part by the CMF and that graduates have gone on to secure positions in hospitals, retail, hospitality, and other service industries across the region. Director Hunter described how the CMF has played a critical role in providing vulnerable populations with the tools that they need to thrive. He explained that through this support, 31 immigrants have enrolled in their training program, 30 have graduated resulting in a 97% completion rate, and 74% have secured jobs with seven of their current students working towards placement in full-time living wage jobs.

e. [Presentation by Community Work Services](#) (30:04)

Christina Polcari, Employment Specialist at Community Work Services, presented on behalf of her organization. She explained that Community Work Services was founded in 1877 and has a long history of successfully supporting vulnerable groups with barriers to employment, including formerly incarcerated individuals, those experiencing homelessness and/or substance abuse, veterans, immigrants, and people with disabilities. Ms. Polcari described how all their programs are provided free of charge and serves an estimated 800 individuals per year. She explained that their skills-based training includes their hotel, hospitality, and culinary arts program.

f. [Presentation by International Institute of New England](#) (32:16)

Alexis Kubana, Associate Director of Workforce Development at the International Institute of New England, provided background on his organization and how they have had to adjust their model during the COVID-19 pandemic. He described their various certification programs. Associate Director Kubana also noted that over 50 individuals have been trained through their programs with attendance around 98% and a job placement rate of 75%. He described the CMF as a gamechanger for their organization.

g. [Presentation by La Colaborativa](#) (37:10)

Carlos Galvez, Director of Economic Sustainability and Mobility at La Colaborativa, described his previous student experience at the International Institute of New England. He described how La Colaborativa serves the residents of Chelsea, Everett, Revere, and East Boston. Director Galvez noted how the CMF is a great opportunity to build long-term synergy between high impact business projects, impacted underserved communities, and non-profit organizations in those communities. He described how in the last few years, they have provided services to 3,648 residents of the Boston Metro North area for job readiness, economic development, and familial sustainability. Director Galvez went on to note that La Colaborativa has served 311 residents in finding jobs in 2024 through coaching workshops and job fairs.

h. [Presentation by New England Culinary Arts Training](#) (44:23)

Barbara Platt Johnson, Director of Development at New England Culinary Arts Training (“NECAT”), introduced her organization. She stated that NECAT offers a tuition free 14-week culinary arts job training program at three locations and provides professional culinary training and a wellness curriculum which includes self-care and mindfulness. Director Johnson described NECAT’s Behind the Walls program, which trains adults incarcerated at the Suffolk County House of Correction and provides job counseling and placement services upon release from incarceration. She also explained that NECAT offers their 12-week culinary training program at the East Boston YMCA, which is taught in Spanish and English.

Director Johnson noted that they recently received requests to support new arrivals from Haiti and were previously not able to accommodate them because of the language barrier. She stated that they applied for a second year of a CMF grant to provide two cohorts of training and start a Haitian Creole culinary program. Director Johnson noted that it was incredibly successful for the people who participated in April 2024. She reported that 20 people enrolled in the pilot program with 17 of them graduating. She noted that 70% of them are now working at documented jobs which allowed them to secure permanent housing given the verifiable income requirement. Director Johnson explained that NECAT is hosting their annual fundraiser next week, which will feature a food menu of Caribbean fusion to highlight the talents of their chefs in East Boston and in the Haitian Creole programs. She emphasized that none of these programs would be possible without CMF funds. Director Johnson described how out of the 180 adults a year who benefit

from their program, most have major barriers to employment, almost half were formerly incarcerated, and a quarter of them experience homelessness or are in recovery.

i. [Presentation by Somerville Community Corporation](#) (50:53)

Renee Taylor, Director of Community Programs at Somerville Community Corporation (“SCC”), spoke about the history of SCC. She mentioned that SCC has been around for over 50 years with their main office in Somerville’s Union Square. Director Taylor described SCC’s First Source jobs program, which provides tools and resources to ensure all participants have the skills to obtain employment and become great employees. Director Taylor noted that they teach digital tools like Outlook, Excel, and PowerPoint. She also spoke about their coaching staff who speak a diverse range of languages to meet the needs of their clients. Director Taylor spoke about how the CMF has enabled them to provide specialized programming.

j. [Presentation by YMCA](#) (55:55)

Jon Sproul, Executive Director of the YMCA of Greater Boston (“YMCA”), spoke about how the CMF transforms the way they work at the YMCA. He described how the YMCA has an education and training center that provides English as a second language in Boston and Woburn. The representative stated that these funds have allowed the YMCA to start a contextualized culinary arts training program in the East Boston YMCA in partnership with NECAT and that they have launched a similar program in Woburn. He described how the CMF has allowed them to sustain and grow these programs.

3. [Discussion and Questions](#) (01:01:26)

Interim Chair Maynard spoke about the Commission’s focus on making sure that people get the best use of the CMF. Commissioner Skinner expressed her appreciation for each organization and stated that it was valuable to hear personal stories. Commissioner O’Brien thanked the organizations as well and stated that this really humanizes the CMF applications for her. Commissioner Hill described how the funding provided by the CMF are competitive grants and how he’s very proud of the work they did in the Legislature to approve the CMF and the work that each of these organizations are doing in the community.

Interim Chair Maynard asked the audience what the Commission can do to continue to help. He encouraged the organizations to let their voice be heard with elected officials if they believe this funding is valuable. Director Galvez at La Colaborativa emphasized the importance of bringing visibility to the work that they do.

The Commission then presented a certificate of appreciation to President and CEO Albrizio-Lee of MassHire and was joined at the front of the room by each of the organization representatives and took a photograph.

4. Commissioner Updates

Transcriber's Note: This topic was not discussed.

5. [Other Business](#) (01:13:53)

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

Commissioner Skinner moved to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner O'Brien. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned.

List of Documents and Other Items Used

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