



## Subcommittee on Community Mitigation

*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 Subcommittee on Community Mitigation will conduct a public meeting utilizing remote collaboration technology.*

**Date/Time:** November 23, 2020 at 1:30 p.m.

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

**Present:** Eric Demas, Everett  
Haskell Kennedy Jr., Springfield  
Sean Cronin, Department of Revenue  
Commissioner Bruce Stebbins, Chair  
John Robertson, Mass Municipal Association  
Ron Hogan, LCMAC region A representative  
Jennifer Bonfiglio, LCMAC region B representative  
Chad Bourque, MGC Financial Analyst  
Joseph Delaney, MGC Director of Community Affairs  
Dr. Alexandra Lightbown, MGC Director of Racing  
Jacqui Krum, Encore Boston Harbor Senior Vice President/ General Counsel  
Tania Perez, MGC Administrative/Project Assistant  
Mary Thurlow, MGC Community Affairs Program Manager

### Call to Order

[1:31 p.m.](#) Chair Stebbins called meeting of the Subcommittee on Community Mitigation (“Subcommittee”) to order.

### Discussion of 2021 Community Mitigation Fund Guidelines

[1:31 p.m.](#) Mr. Delaney informed the Subcommittee that the updated guidelines for the 2021 Community Mitigation Fund (“CMF”) grant season had been approved by the Massachusetts Gaming Commission (“MGC”), and that solicitation for applications will begin that day. Mr. Delaney mentioned that the only public comment received for the guidelines were suggestions that had already been in place with the CMF. He informed the Subcommittee that the next step is meeting with communities that still have reserve funds allocated before the casino openings to discuss how to use them. He discussed planning workshops with communities to coach them through writing better applications. He also mentioned that he was planning to tell the Hampden County’s sheriff’s office that the commitment to use CMF funds to fund their lease for their alcohol treatment center had expired. Chair Stebbins reiterated that the planned workshops are for helping communities fill out grant applications more thoroughly.

### Update of COVID Impact from Licensee

[1:37 p.m.](#) Encore Boston Harbor's ("EBH") Senior Vice President/General Counsel Ms. Krum began the discussion around effects the pandemic has had on their gaming establishment. She informed members that EBH closed down in March of this year and reopened in July. Their successful reopening had to follow state, MGC, and sectorial guidelines and regulations in order to ensure the utmost safety for staff and patrons. They also developed a health and safety plan with help from public health experts.

Even though they are currently allowed to open the gaming facility for reduced hours, they have been unable to open their hotels and restaurants, which has significantly affected their staffing. Their main challenges during the pandemic have been enforcing mask-wearing and social distancing, their limited number of staircases, and how to ensure patrons safely enjoy their beverages. Chair Stebbins asked Ms. Krum about how other jurisdictions have been regulating casinos in comparison to Massachusetts. Ms. Krum explained that casinos in some surrounding and nearby states are open later than EBH, attracting patrons that would normally be theirs, but keeping the community safe is a priority for them.

### **Discussion of Horse Racing in Massachusetts- Dr. Alexandra Lightbown**

[1:46 p.m.](#) Chair Stebbins introduced MGC Director of Racing Dr. Lightbown and MGC Financial Analyst Chad Bourque to update the Subcommittee on how Massachusetts horse racing fared during the pandemic. Dr. Lightbown informed the Subcommittee that the season's opening was delayed due to the pandemic but was able to start during the summer. She explained that purse and account wagering money go to not only the horsemen, but the vendors, employees and suppliers that are involved with racing. She touched on the roles of different racing employees, including veterinarian staff who make sure horses are healthy before and after races. Protocols needed to be enacted at the live racetrack and simulcast facility to ensure everyone's health. She also mentioned setting up successful drive-through betting in the parking lot for Kentucky Derby day.

The racetrack follows the Association of Racing Commissions International's policies around using a certified laboratory to test horse samples. Thoroughbred horsemen are still looking for somewhere to build a track. There had been a big increase in standardbred births in the Commonwealth this year. Chair Stebbins mentioned that some racing statutes need to be updated, especially in regard to thoroughbred racing. Mr. Delaney asked about the likelihood of standalone thoroughbred tracks, for which there have been a few proposals. Dr. Lightbown answered that the Sturbridge proposal would give the state a thoroughbred racetrack whether or not they had sports betting approved. A portion of the Racehorse Development Fund ("RDF") would go into thoroughbred race purses. She mentioned that any accepted proposal would necessitate new legislation.

[2:08 p.m.](#) Dr. Lightbown introduced MGC Financial Analyst Chad Bourque to speak about the financial aspect of racing. He explained how the local aid goes to host communities of racetracks and simulcast facilities gets calculated. With the pandemic, handles across the state were lower than in the previous year.

Mr. Delaney asked Dr. Lightbown to elaborate on the Racehorse Development Fund (RDF). Dr. Lightbown explained that a portion of gaming and racing revenue gets placed into the fund, which then gets allocated to breeding programs, horsemen's health and pension plans, and race purses for each horse breed. The legislation also mandates a committee to oversee horse racing, that meets a few times a year. Due to Suffolk Downs not holding live thoroughbred racing this year, a slightly bigger portion of the RDF goes to the standardbred horsemen. She briefly touched

on the recent regulation change to allow the RDF to be split between the two breeds per individual RDF category, instead of each category being split the same way between the two breeds.

### **Discussion of Next Steps**

[2:28 p.m.](#) Mr. Delaney reminded the Subcommittee that this was their last meeting of the year, that the solicitation for applications to the CMF were going out that day, the upcoming CMF application workshops for communities, and that the application deadline is January 31. He mentioned possibly having an April meeting. Chair Stebbins and Mr. Delaney agreed on inviting all the CMF committees to the upcoming application workshops. Chair Stebbins reminded the Subcommittee that the Commission is still discussing using a portion of CMF funds towards administrative costs, and that they would probably have that completed by the end of the year.

**Other Business- reserved for matters the Chair did not reasonably anticipate at the time of posting.** No issues were brought forward.

[2:33 p.m.](#)

*With no further business, Ms. Bonfiglio moved to adjourn. Mr. Hogan seconded the motion.*

*Roll Call Vote:*

*Mr. Demas: Aye.*

*Mr. Kennedy Jr.: Aye.*

*Mr. Cronin: Aye.*

*Mr. Stebbins: Aye.*

*Mr. Hogan: Aye.*

*Ms. Bonfiglio: Aye.*

*The motion to adjourn passed 6:0.*

[2:33 p.m.](#)

*With no further topics for discussion, Chair Stebbins adjourned the meeting.*

### **List of Documents and Other Items Used**

1. Notice and agenda for November 23, 2020 meeting of the Subcommittee on Community Mitigation
2. 2021 Community Mitigation Fund Guidelines
3. Minutes from the October 27, 2020 meeting of the Subcommittee on Community Mitigation

/s/ Tania J. Perez  
Secretary