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## Massachusetts Gaming Commission Meeting Minutes

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**Date/Time:** April 24, 2025, 10:00 a.m.  
**Place:** Massachusetts Gaming Commission  
VIA CONFERENCE CALL NUMBER: 1-646-741-5292  
PARTICIPANT CODE: 111 367 6497

The Commission conducted this public meeting remotely utilizing collaboration technology. Use of this technology was intended to ensure an adequate, alternative means of public access to the Commission's deliberations for any interested member of the public.

### **Commissioners Present:**

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

### 1. [Call to Order](#) (00:03)

Interim Chair Maynard called to order the 552<sup>nd</sup> Public Meeting of the Massachusetts Gaming Commission ("Commission"). Roll call attendance was conducted, and all five commissioners were present for the meeting.

### 2. [Meeting Minutes](#) (01:15)

- a. January 10, 2023
- b. July 26, 2024
- c. October 3, 2024

Commissioner Skinner moved to approve the minutes from the January 10, 2023, July 16, 2024, and October 3, 2024 public meetings that are included in the Commissioners' packet, subject to any necessary corrections for typographical errors or other non-material matters. Commissioner O'Brien seconded the motion.

*Roll call vote:*

*Commissioner O'Brien: Aye.*  
*Commissioner Hill: Aye.*  
*Commissioner Skinner: Aye.*  
*Commissioner Brodeur: Abstain.*  
*Chair Maynard: Aye.*  
*The motion passed, 4-0, with 1 abstention.*

d. [March 27, 2025](#) (01:59)

Commissioner Skinner moved to approve the minutes from the March 27, 2025 public meeting that are included in the Commissioners' packet, subject to any necessary corrections for typographical errors or other non-material matters. Commissioner Brodeur seconded the motion.

*Roll call vote:*  
*Commissioner O'Brien: Aye.*  
*Commissioner Hill: Aye.*  
*Commissioner Skinner: Aye.*  
*Commissioner Brodeur: Aye.*  
*Chair Maynard: Aye.*  
*The motion passed unanimously, 5-0.*

3. [Legislative Update](#) (02:55)

a. Overview of House Ways and Means FY26 Budget

Commissioner Hill reviewed the budget proposal that was recently put forward by the Massachusetts House of Representatives ("House"). He noted that the payment to cities and towns for local racing tax revenue was funded at the requested level of \$922,824. However, while the budget proposal for FY26 did level fund the Public Health Trust Fund and the Racehorse Development Fund, it did not contain a distribution of funds to the Community Mitigation Fund ("CMF"). Similar to last year, the proposed non-distribution to the CMF is proposed to be a one-year redistribution and does not permanently amend G.L. c. 23K, § 59.

Commissioner Hill noted that in light of this budget proposed by the House for FY26 and its effect on the CMF, the Commission will need to consider whether to (1) spend down the funds that are currently in the CMF account, which would leave about \$2.1 million in the account for FY27 based on the approximate total request of \$25 million, which includes about \$5 million in waivers; (2) grant the amount proposed by the CMF guidelines of approximately \$19 million, which would not include any waivers and which would leave about \$8.8 million in funding for FY27; or (3) reduce funding for FY26 which would leave additional funding for FY27. He noted that the review team is well through the process of reviewing applications so discussion by the Commission on CMF allocations for FY26 is very timely.

Commissioner Hill further noted the importance of this program to the cities and towns which surround the casinos and which use this funding for mitigation purposes but further noted that this is the second year in a row where the budget includes a proposal to not fund the CMF.

Commissioner Brodeur expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to be a part of the CMF review team. He stated that though the program may not be funded in FY26, the Commission would continue to advocate for additional funding in future years. Chair Maynard added that though the Commission may be preparing for a change, he noted the importance of putting the communities first.

4. [Administrative Update](#) (31:45)

*Transcriber's note: Discussion of this agenda item occurred after agenda item no. 6(a).*

Executive Director Dean Serpa reminded everyone of the public hearing scheduled on Thursday, May 1, 2025 as part of the renewal process for Plainridge Park Casino's category 2 gaming license. The public hearing will be held in person at the Plainville Town Hall in order to gather information and gauge public sentiment relative to the renewal of the license. ED Serpa noted that there has been outreach to stakeholders in the surrounding communities, businesses and the public and further noted that written comments via email are being accepted through May 8, 2025.

5. [Discussion of Process for Annual Review of Executive Director](#) (09:33)

Chair Maynard asked Commissioner O'Brien to begin the discussion on the process for the annual review of the Executive Director. Commissioner O'Brien stated that forms to be used in connection with this process were updated by herself and former Commissioner Bruce Stebbins in 2021. She reviewed the process as proposed by the Human Resources team, which would include completion of a self-evaluation by ED Serpa, written evaluations by all five commissioners, and individual meetings between commissioners and ED Serpa prior to discussion at a public meeting on both the Commission's assessment of the past year and future goals as well as on compensation. As ED Serpa's one year anniversary has just passed, Commissioner O'Brien recommended moving forward with this process with the goal of completion by the end of June so that ED Serpa will be able to concentrate on the staff evaluation process which will begin that month. She proposed that ED Serpa complete his self-evaluation by May 5, 2025 with Commissioner evaluations and individual meetings to take place in May and public meeting discussions to be held towards the end of June.

Both Commissioners Brodeur and Skinner expressed their appreciation of the work that has gone into developing this process as well as the requisite forms. Commissioner Skinner agreed with the proposed timeline but requested that ED Serpa be given some additional time beyond May 5, 2025 to complete a thorough self-evaluation given the tight turnaround. Commissioner O'Brien noted that she also raised that as a potential issue but said that she was informed that ED Serpa had already begun the process and believed the proposed May 5, 2025 date was acceptable. ED Serpa confirmed that he was comfortable with this proposed timeline.

Chair Maynard noted that as things have changed in the past few years in regard to evaluations, he would like to re-evaluate this process next year. However, he agreed to move forward with the proposed process and timeline for this annual review.

6. [Investigations and Enforcement Bureau](#) (18:29)

Chair Maynard turned to Chief of the Licensing Division Kara O'Brien who started by expressing her appreciation of David MacKay, Licensing Manager, on the occasion of his last meeting with the Commission. She noted that he began as a financial investigator before moving into the Licensing Division and touched on a number of his accomplishments. Manager MacKay thanked Chief O'Brien for her kind words.

a. [Encore Boston Harbor's Request for Service Registration Exemptions](#) (21:00)

Manager MacKay presented a request from Encore Boston Harbor ("Encore") for service employee registration exemptions for two new positions. *A memo outlining the proposed request and additional relevant documents are included in the Commissioners' Packet at pages 48 through 59.* The two positions requested for exemption by Encore include: (1) Off Site – Warehouse Driver Attendant, who would be largely involved with handling goods in storage in the warehouse as well as responsible for operating a large transport truck, and (2) Off Site – Warehouse Receiving Attendant, who would be responsible for storage and handling of goods in the warehouse. Manager MacKay stated that though the goods are ultimately intended for the Encore property, neither position will receive, handle or transport gaming-related equipment. He also noted that the Commission previously exempted a position similar to those proposed for exemption today as well as the supervisor to whom these two positions will report. Lastly, Manager MacKay noted that he worked closely with Kara Henson, Director of Talent Acquisition at Encore, to obtain all necessary information.

Commissioner Hill moved that pursuant to 205 CMR 134.03(1)(b), the Commission exempt the positions of Off Site – Warehouse Driver Attendant and Off Site – Warehouse Receiving Attendant within the Warehouse Department at Encore Boston Harbor from the service employee registration requirements as outlined in the Commissioners' Packet and discussed here today. Commissioner Brodeur seconded the motion.

*Roll call vote:*

*Commissioner O'Brien: Aye.*

*Commissioner Hill: Aye.*

*Commissioner Skinner: Aye.*

*Commissioner Brodeur: Aye.*

*Chair Maynard: Aye.*

*The motion passed unanimously, 5-0.*

Subsequent to the Commission's vote, the commissioners also expressed their appreciation for the work of Manager MacKay and wished him the best in his future endeavors. Manager MacKay thanked each commissioner for their well wishes.

7. [Research and Responsible Gaming](#) (33:22)

a. Voluntary Self-Exclusion Program Update

Mark Vander Linden, Director of Research and Responsible Gaming, and Program Manager Long Banh provided an update to the Commission on the Voluntary Self-Exclusion (“VSE”) program. *A copy of the presentation is included in the Commissioners’ Packet at pages 60 through 72.* Director Vander Linden provided background on the VSE program and an overview of key elements of the program. The presentation also covered the reinstatement session requirement at the conclusion of the chosen duration period, which can be completed in person or remotely, and is intended to be informational and educational, not a screening or assessment.

Manager Banh reviewed the materials which are provided to enrollees during the enrollment session, which include a signed copy of the enrollment agreement, a palm card which lists available resources and highlights terms of the VSE agreement, and a business card that provides the individual’s reinstatement eligibility date. He also reviewed data compiled on the VSE program, including the number of yearly enrollments or reinstatements as well as data on forfeitures. Manager Banh stated that he would provide commissioners with the total dollar value of forfeitures since 2023 as requested by Commissioner Skinner.

Director Vander Linden reviewed key findings from the 2018 evaluation of the VSE program which was completed by the Cambridge Health Alliance Division on Addiction. He highlighted that 3/4 of enrollees who completed a follow-up interview enrolled in VSE programs in other states, an important data point considering state by state requirements in the tight New England area. He noted the consideration of a national or regional VSE program and that they continue to consider options in this regard. He stated that the 2025 VSE program evaluation is part of the FY25 research agenda and will touch on many of the same elements in addition to other areas based on changes since 2018. He noted that a Request for Response was posted on April 8, 2025 with responses due by May 23, 2025.

Chair Maynard stated that he would be on board with creation of a VSE program across states. He also stated that he wants to place more of an onus on operators to make sure that individuals who have a problem are truly taken care of and further, to avoid situations where winning a jackpot is the only manner in which an individual is found to be enrolled in the VSE program. Commissioner Skinner agreed with Chair Maynard and stated that she was looking forward to seeing an updated evaluation of the program. Commissioner Brodeur also agreed with the Chair’s remarks and expressed a desire to create better interventions and more regular outreach to avoid such situations which result in forfeitures. Director Vander Linden agreed that they should consider other ways to be more proactive and clearer in communication. Commissioner Skinner added that she is looking forward to the IEB coming before the Commission to discuss ways to improve the casino processes related to enforcement of the VSE program.

b. [GameSense Quarterly Report](#) (1:11:29)

Director Vander Linden introduced the GameSense team who presented their quarterly report for the third quarter of FY2025. The team consisted of Janine Ruggiero, Chief Marketing Officer; Odessa Dwarika, Chief Programs Officer; Amy Gabrila, Director of Player Health; and Anita Pang, GameSense Advisor at Encore Boston Harbor.

Chief Marketing Officer Ruggiero reviewed the agenda for their report. She then reviewed GameSense’s funders as well as specific data highlights for the third quarter. She highlighted a significant jump in interactions and demonstrations due to their unique campaign for Problem Gambling Awareness Month (“PGAM”) in March. Director Gabrila presented GameSense’s Magic Moments as well as their Champion Award winners. Chief Marketing Officer Ruggiero then recapped events held during PGAM at the three casinos as well as the Commission’s Lunch and Learn, followed by Director Gabrila who reviewed some of the new games they have developed, including a slot machine simulator game and bingo game, in an effort to provide patrons with specific information and resources. Chief Programs Officer Dwarika discussed some of the peer support provided by peer support specialists and the Lived Experience Advisory Panel, noting Commissioner Skinner’s attendance at a March meeting of the panel to hear what their respective communities did during PGAM. Chief Programs Officer Dwarika also discussed gambling awareness groups and the presentations that Jodie Nealley, Director of Recovery Services, gave before various Massachusetts peer-run recovery centers. GameSense Advisor Pang presented on inclusive content at Encore Boston Harbor, particularly various efforts to connect with Asian patrons. Chief Marketing Officer Ruggiero concluded the presentation by noting a Lunar New Year activity in February, which resonated well with patrons, as well as by discussing an upcoming campaign for Safe Ride Home at MGM in May/June 2025 based on funding from the CMF.

The commissioners thanked the GameSense team for their presentation.

8. [Commissioner Updates](#) (1:55:50)

After inquiry by Chair Maynard, no commissioner updates were noted.

9. [Other Business](#) (1:55:55)

Hearing no other business, Chair Maynard requested a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Brodeur moved to adjourn. Commissioner Hill seconded the motion.

*Roll call vote:*

*Commissioner O’Brien: Aye.*

*Commissioner Hill: Aye.*

*Commissioner Skinner: Aye.*

*Commissioner Brodeur: Aye.*

*Chair Maynard: Aye.*

*The motion passed unanimously, 5-0.*

**List of Documents and Other Items Used**

1. [Notice of Meeting and Agenda](#) dated April 22, 2025
2. [Commissioners’ Packet](#) from the April 24, 2025 meeting (posted on massgaming.com)