



**Meeting of the
Local Community Mitigation Advisory Committee (“LCMAC”)
Region B**

Date/Time: August 6, 2024, at 10:30 a.m.

Place: VIA CONFERENCE CALL NUMBER: 1 646 741 5293
PARTICIPANT CODE: 111 509 9664 Passcode: 511250

Members Present: Rick Sullivan, Chair
Barbara Bard, Agawam
Michael Pise, Chicopee
Robert Watchilla, East Longmeadow
Jenny Cruz Rivera, Holyoke
Louis Kornet, Longmeadow
Marc Strange, Ludlow
Brian Connors, Springfield
Judith Theocles, Wilbraham
Kate Scott O’Brien, West Springfield
Douglas Hall, PVPC
Ellen Patashnick, Human Service Provider
Joan Kagan Levine, Human Service Provider
Robin Wozniak, C of C

Others Present: Gus Kim, MGM
Sean Cronin, Subcommittee
Haskell Kennedy, Subcommittee
Joseph Delaney, MGC
Mary Thurlow, MGC

Call to Order

Chair Richard Sullivan called the Region B Local Community Mitigation Advisory Committee (“Committee”) meeting to order. Mary Thurlow did a rollcall.

Approval of minutes

The Chair then proposed approving the minutes from the committee meetings of September 19, 2023, and October 17, 2023, subject to correction for typographic errors and other nonmaterial matters. The Chair requested a motion to move to accept the minutes, Lou Kornet moved the motion which was seconded by Ellen Patashnick. The minutes were unanimously approved by members: Rick Sullivan, Michael Pise, Louis Kornet, Marc Strange, Brian Connors, Judith Theocles, Kate Scott O’Brien, Douglas Hall, Ellen Patashnick, and Joan Levine. Barbara Bard Robin Wozniak, Robert Watchilla, and Jenny Cruz Rivera abstained.



Summary of Community Mitigation Fund FY2025

Mr. Delaney then began updating the Committee on the results of the FY 2025 Grant cycle and highlighted the success of the new Block Grant program. He recognized that development of projects on addressing casino related impacts is still difficult. A few projects had anti-aid issues and could not be funded. Community Affairs is going to provide more guidance on these issues in the upcoming year. Agawam, Hampden and North Attleboro did not apply for grants. Mr. Kornet asked if the intent was to stay with the format of the Block Grant. Mr. Delaney noted that it increased the utilization of the grant in such a large amount that it makes sense to continue.

State Budget Discussion

Mr. Delaney provided detail as to the State Budget process and explained how the state budget has incorporated the anticipated funding from the Community Mitigation Fund so that no additional funding will be added to the fund for fiscal year 2025. What that means is that after the recent \$18.3 million in awards there is approximately \$30 million left in the account which is sufficient to keep the program going at its current level. Starting at the beginning of FY 2026 money should start flowing back into the fund. Mr. Delaney noted that we don't know what will happen next year, but the expectation is that the funds will start to flow back into the CMF in FY 2026. There was discussion about whether this could happen next.

Chair Sullivan thanked members for communicating the budget items to their local representatives and noted the concern about next year's budget. The Chair noted that communities need to be clear with the Governor that these monies have to come back to the Community Mitigation Fund.

Mr. Delaney noted that in the next year the Commission is going to make an effort to shine the light on what good things are accomplished through the use of this fund. Mr. Sullivan said this needs to be a yearlong project plan to campaign. It should start now not after the Governor proposes the budget for FY 2026.

Mr. Kornet suggested that publicity is needed about these programs and what the projects are, where the funding is coming from, and communication on positive aspects of what this funding is trying to accomplish and the results. Mr. Delaney concurred.

Mr. Pise noted that the change in the program with the Guidelines, and structure resulted in improved their applications, and he didn't think the legislature saw that.

Discussion continued FY 2026 Community Mitigation Fund Policy Issues (based on memo provided.)

1. **How much money should be allocated for the FY 2026 CMF?** Mr. Delaney explained the two options available depending upon the legislature as noted in the memo. He suggested leaving the current program as it was this past year. He asked for comments.



Mr. Kornet suggested discussing item #2 in the memo which is the money generated in Region A stays in Region A and money in Region B stay in Region B. **Mr. Delaney** commented that MGM generates approximately 1/3 of the amount compared to Encore. If we were to keep the policy as is Region B would only get approximately \$1.5 million of funding next grant round.

- 2. Should funds be transferred from Region A to Region B?** **Mr. Delaney** explained the long-standing policy of keeping the funding in each region. With the taking of funds this year, **Mr. Delaney** proposed transferring some of the funds from Region A to Region B to keep the balance in the regions as it had been in the past. As this is an extraordinary circumstance for this year, **Mr. Delaney** recommended that the Commission keep funding at the same level as last year - \$4.3 million in Region B and \$11.5 million in Region A. Region B members of the LCMAC were in favor.

Mr. Kornet noted that there were a few gambles here and asked if staff has a feeling for how the Commission stands on equalizing the funding? **Mr. Delaney** noted that the staff will provide its recommendations and thinks they would probably make the move to move the funding given the circumstances.

Mr. Sullivan asked whether Community Affairs has met with the other region, and do you think they will oppose it? **Mr. Delaney** thought that Region A knows the circumstances so does not think they will oppose it. **Mr. Sullivan** asked whether this a policy that could just be in for a year or two. **Mr. Delaney** noted that each policy can be changed annually as new Guidelines are written every year.

Mr. Delaney then went back to Question 1 of the memo to mention that communities absorbed the additional funding well from this year. If we reduce the funding, it would send the wrong message to the legislature. **Mr. Connors**, **Mr. Kornet**, **Ms. Patashnick** agreed to keeping the amounts the same as last year.

- 3. Should the Commission make any changes to grant eligibility?** No changes were made last year to eligibility, but some eligible communities are distant from the casino and impacts resolved. There are smaller impacts the further out from the casino the community is located. Communities are still competing for discretionary dollars. We may want to limit categories that some communities can apply. Should we be limiting the uses for this money? **Mr. Kornet** does not see communities 20 miles away being impacted and is in favor of an analysis on justify the categories. **Mr. Sullivan** felt that most traffic issues have already been mitigated and are no longer the driver on funding. Impacts that need to be mitigated are more economic development and problem gambling issues. **Mr. Delaney** noted that public safety is also an ongoing need. Due to the budget, we are reluctant to make any changes this year.
- 4. Should the Commission make any changes to the distribution formula?** **Mr. Delaney** noted that we are not suggesting making any changes. The waivers seem to have taken care of any issues. Some communities requested more funding in which case they used the waiver form. **Brian Connors** noted that Springfield's allocation was less that when they had been receiving the previous year as a host community, but the waiver worked.



5. **Should the Commission change the length of the grant term or not allow extensions of current grants?** Mr. Delaney explained that the grants are currently for four years. A change to a reduced length of grant would be done to compel people to spend funding in a timely fashion. We could shorten up the term of the grants so that towns will spend quicker, or we can take back dormant grants. We do have that the right to rescind. Mr. Kornet noted from personal experience sometimes you are at the mercy of vendors so he would be in favor of 3 years instead of 2. Ellen Patashnick is in support of 3 years.
6. **Should the Commission be more prescriptive on what backup documentation is required?** Mr. Delaney cited the lack of scopes of work and other necessary information in the applications for the grants as an impediment to providing an expeditious review. The Commission will be more prescriptive in the Guidelines this year. We would like to see a quote, a catalogue cut, or detailed scope of work for studies with details such as location, etc. We need to know these are actual projects that have been developed and need back up documentation to ascertain that. We would like to see more consistency of what is contained in the application and will be working to facilitate that through more prescribed Guidelines.
7. **Should the Commission make any changes to the identified project impacts?** Mr. Delaney asked members about when an impact is considered remedied. When should we re-evaluate the categories and impacts? If we start limiting what people can spend money on we may not be able to distribute all the funding. Do the current categories make sense? Mr. Connors asked whether the Gaming Commission is doing any data research on impacts. Mr. Delaney noted that there is a Research Agenda every year proposed to research various topics. Mr. Delaney asked members whether they felt we have done everything we can do to mitigate transportation impacts. He noted that it's a Catch 22 if we start eliminating categories, we will not be able to find projects. Mr. Connors noted that it costs money to look at things through studies. Mr. Delaney suggested PVPC do a regional planning study which could really look at impacts. Mr. Connors though people's patterns have changed dramatically between COVID and working from home.
8. **Should the Commission limit lease assistance to Hampden County Sheriff?** The CMF has funded this lease increase for the past 9 years for the Western Massachusetts Recovery & Wellness Center, a regional correctional treatment center in Ludlow. When have we mitigated the impact? Mr. Sullivan thought it should be left as is but felt that the Sheriff needs to be aware that if these dollars are going away it would be prudent for staff to have that discussion and make him aware. Mr. Delaney stated that the Sheriff is aware.
9. **Should the Commission establish a policy on the purchase of vehicles?** Mr. Delaney explained that there are a large number of requests for vehicles. He noted we are not a vehicle replacement program. We are not buying replacement vehicles for when communities need to retire a car. Should we limit the number each community can request? We will try to do some additional guidance on this when we draft the Guidelines. Mr. Kornet asked if there been any longer term studies on casino operations and benchmarking that might impact us in the future? Mr. Delaney said he would speak to Mark Vanderlinden. Mr. Kornet also



noted that these studies should deal with impacts now or diminishing them for impacts in the future. He hopes those are considered.

Discussion of Next Steps:

1. The next meeting of the LCMAC will be on September 24, 2024 at 2:00 p.m.
2. Reminder about members needing to update their Ethics Certificates

With no further business, Lou Kornet made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Ellen Patashnick. Members unanimously voted to adjourn.

The Chair adjourned the meeting.

/s/Mary Thurlow
Secretary

List of Documents and Other Items Used

1. Agenda and Notice of Meeting
2. Vote on Minutes from:
 - (a) September 19, 2023
 - (b) October 17, 2023
3. Draft F/Y 2026 Community Mitigation Fund Policy Memo