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## Public Health Trust Fund Executive Committee (PHTFEC) Meeting Minutes

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**Date/Time:** March 7, 2018 – 2:00 p.m.

**Place:** Mass Gaming Commission  
101 Federal Street, Boston, MA 02110

**Present:** **Executive Committee**

Lindsey Tucker, Co-Chair, Associate Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Stephen P. Crosby, Co-Chair, Chairman, Massachusetts Gaming Commission

Jennifer Queally, Undersecretary of Law Enforcement

Rebekah Gewirtz, Executive Director of the National Association of Social Workers, MA Chapter and Representative of the Massachusetts Public Health Association

Michael Sweeney, Executive Director, Massachusetts State Lottery Commission

**Attendees**

Marlene Warner, Executive Director, Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling

Victor Ortiz, Director of the Office of Problem Gambling, Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Teresa Fiore, Manager of Research and Responsible Gaming, Massachusetts Gaming Commission

Mark Vander Linden, Director of Research and Responsible Gaming, Massachusetts Gaming Commission

Enrique Zuniga, Commissioner, Massachusetts Gaming Commission

Edward Bedrosian, Executive Director, Massachusetts Gaming Commission

Giles Li, Executive Director, Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center

**Call to Order**

2:08 p.m. Co-Chair Crosby called to order the Public Health Trust Fund Executive Committee (PHTFEC) Meeting.

## **Approval of Minutes**

Co-Chair Crosby explained that as outlined in the previous meeting minutes, Teresa Fiore will send out a schedule for the next six meetings, and that Mark Vander Linden will email research reports to members of the PHTFEC as they are made public. When available, an executive summary will also be shared along with each report.

Mark Vander Linden added that the Roles and Responsibilities Memo is complete and that it will be reviewed during the next meeting.

Co-Chair Crosby stated that the definition of problem gambling is an important discussion point which should take place during the next meeting.

*Michael Sweeney moved for the approval of the PHTFEC minutes for January 10, 2018. Motion seconded by Jennifer Queally. Motion passed 4-0 as Rebekah Gewirtz was not yet present.*

## **FY19 budget proposal and discussion**

Co-Chair Crosby introduced the FY19 budget proposal and discussion by stating that the intent is not to approve or deny the proposed budgets. Rather, it is meant to provide an overview of the budgets put forth by the Massachusetts Gaming Commission (MGC) Department of Research and Responsible Gambling as well as the Department of Public Health (DPH) Office of Problem Gambling Services.

Enrique Zuniga described the funding mechanisms for the PHTFEC. He stated that the available dollars will include a percentage of Category 1 revenue in addition to an assessment made to MGM Springfield which is set to open in September of 2018. Essentially, Administration and Finance estimates that the first quarter of usable revenue by the PHTFEC from the operation of MGM Springfield is projected to be \$60 million. This means that the 5% of this figure which is usable by the PHTFEC, as defined by statute, is estimated at around \$3 million. This figure combined with the \$5 million assessment of new licensees will bring the overall FY19 budget up to \$8 million. He continued that while it is acceptable to approve a budget prior to the start of a fiscal year, Commonwealth Finance Law states that expenditures and contracts as funded by the Public Health Trust Fund Executive Committee may only be made when there is money in the Trust Fund.

Co-Chair Crosby reiterated that there is a high degree of probability of \$8 million to spend. The two budgets proposed by the MGC and DPH, total \$8.8 million, which means that cuts will need to be made.

Mark Vander Linden highlighted the changes between Fiscal Years 18 and 19. He justified an increase in the GameSense budget by stating that the program is growing and needs to launch services in Western Massachusetts prior to the September 2018 opening of MGM Springfield. The proposed increase reflects preparation for the opening of Wynn Boston Harbor in early summer 2019. In comparison to the GameSense program currently operating at Plainridge Park Casino, GameSense at MGM Springfield and Wynn Boston Harbor will need to be much larger and more complex. The budget for GameSense Communication also increased slightly in anticipation of Category 1 casino openings. Proposed budget increases also included \$55,000 to be put towards a part-time research consultant. This individual will be instrumental in organizing the Data, Storage and Access program, coordinating the Gaming Research Review Committee and taking a closer look at strategic planning for the research agenda. Overall total increases represent a \$1.8 million dollar from last year's budget.

Mark Vander Linden referenced his full budget narrative to provide additional detail on changes to the GameSense program. A large portion of the additional funds will go towards hiring more staff, known as GameSense Advisors.

Referencing cost efficiency, Co-Chair Crosby questioned whether there would be a way to work with DPH in identifying and working with high-risk populations.

Mark Vander Linden reviewed the various studies scheduled to take place during the fiscal year. He recommended that and \$50,000 be added to the special population research so that additional questions which come out of the preliminary study could be addressed.

Michael Sweeney suggested a partnership with EOPSS for the Data, Transfer, Access and Storage Project as a means of cost efficiency. Co-Chair Tucker suggested working with DPH as they already store lots of data and would complement the systems which they already have in place.

Michael Sweeney expressed concern over the budget for special project research as he believed that more dollars should be allotted for special populations, particularly within host communities. Co-Chair Tucker shared Michael Sweeney's concern. He further added that he would like to see a plan put in place that is going to make concrete efforts within host communities.

Mark Vander Linden explained that the \$100,000 which was used for Special Population Studies during FY18 was seed money to be built on in future years. He stated that there is potential to move dollars from SEIGMA over to this item, however, to date, the MGC has been unable to receive an itemized budget from the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Michael Sweeney shared his discomfort for the proposed GameSense budget, which compromised approximately 40% of the entire FY19 budget. He questioned whether the proposed staffing level and hours have been evaluated for effectiveness and whether on-site programs such as PlayMyWay are able to take the place of in-person staffing hours.

Jennifer Queally questioned the SEIGMA budget and said that she would more comfortable when voting on the budget if an itemized budget was shared.

Rebekah Gewirtz added that GameSense seems more like a clinical initiative as proposed to a public health initiative. While GameSense represents an important component, she believes that the goal of the public health trust fund should be to put more work into prevention and that more resources should be directed upstream.

Mark Vander Linden replied that individuals who visit the casinos are themselves at an increased risk of developing a gambling problem. The purpose of GameSense as an on-site program is to provide people with information and resources so that they don't continue down a continuum towards problem gambling behavior.

Michael Sweeney stated that he is unsure whether GameSense is the most effective means of prevention if it comes with a \$2 million dollar price tag. He further questioned whether the functionality of GameSense could also be accomplished through tighter partnerships with community health centers, where people are manifesting a variety of concerns with medical professionals.

Co-Chair Tucker suggested that moving forward the MGC and DPH present a single budget.

Victor Ortiz introduced the OPGS budget and explained that it was organized into strategic initiative, priority area, service area, description and proposed budget. He stated that some uncertainty exists within the budget due to the ongoing status of various projects. The purpose is to build a public health response to the various initiatives.

The regional planning process began in FY 17 in Plainville/Region C and in FY 18 has evolved into Region A and B. The goal is to inform prevention initiatives for both youth and at-risk populations as outlined in the PHTF Strategic Plan. Results from the Regional Planning Process in Region A and B will also inform communication campaigns targeting other at-risk groups. In FY 19 in pursuit of the PHTF Strategic Plan, an evaluation of the Statewide Gambling and Substance Abuse Helplines to explore potential advantages, disadvantages, and mechanisms for connecting both helplines will be conducted.

FY 19, Pilot Community Health Worker and Problem Gambling Project in both Plainville/Region C and Region B for screening, referrals, and resources.

Victor Ortiz also stated that a program coordinator would begin work on Monday March 12<sup>th</sup>, and that their primary responsibility would be to support programmatic oversight.

Co-Chair Tucker highlighted the new initiatives as proposed by the OPGS, bringing the total proposed budget to \$3.6 million dollars.

Jennifer Queally stated that problem gamblers may also struggle with alcohol misuse in addition to the referenced tobacco abuse. She questioned why tobacco was prioritized and alcohol was not, as alcohol is a mind-altering substance which is proven to result in decreased inhibition.

Victor Ortiz replied that the initiative is to explore all associations; however he would gather additional details.

Marlene Warner clarified that the referenced treatment centers are not independent problem gambling agencies; rather, clinicians typically deal with gambling as secondary or tertiary issue.

Michael Sweeney stated that he would like to review the communication campaign prior to casting a vote. He added that he would like to know the vehicles in which GameSense is using to market their brand.

Co-Chair Tucker stated that she would bring communication proposals to the next meeting.

Co-Chair Crosby expressed concern that the treatment gap analysis was not yet complete and that much of the OPGS budget seems to be based on educated guesses about where FY18 work is going to go. PhotoVoice Initiative 1 was based largely on Region Planning Process in Plainville/Region C June report, and it looked as if the data from those two efforts showed to be inconclusive or ineffective.

Victor Ortiz stated that program is evidence-based model within substance abuse field.

Chairman Crosby cited the MGC's use of a precautionary approach as justification for programs which have not yet been evaluated. In this instance, it seems as though data does exist but that it suggests that the program is ineffective.

Victor Ortiz responded that many public health approaches are done with a low number of participants and that evaluating this approach over a long time with an expanded cohort will offer a better measure of effectiveness.

Co-Chair Crosby questioned how the technical assistance of prevention services compared to what the Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling is already doing. Education Development Center provides technical assistance for prevention, which represents a whole different level of skill set for technical assistance than what MCCG provides.

Jennifer Queally requested that the future MGC and DPH budget proposals are combined into a single document as different formatting makes it challenging to compare the two.

Co-Chair Tucker stated that the next meeting is scheduled for April 4<sup>th</sup> and that materials would be shared in advance.

### **Public Comment**

Marlene Warner thanked the PHTFEC for the progress which they have made and agreed that a combined budget would make sense for ease of understanding. As a member of the public, her primary questions relate to research headlines. As an example, when she receives questions about African American males in Massachusetts, she would like to be able to easily reference current studies, community program and mental health services which are offered specifically for this group. She is concerned and believes that the public may also be concerned that the various agendas remain in a preparatory stage while the opening of two massive casinos is very close. She further added that the work of GameSense Advisors are not limited to the casino floor, rather they work in the community as well.

Giles Li added that particularly when reviewing the special population studies, it still feels as if there are silos. He believes that special populations should be incorporated throughout all line items.

Michael Sweeney stated that it is time for the group to begin taking risks and to try things which are tangible in making community impacts. He added that increasing research dollars without sending some money to address the people who are negatively affected by expanded gambling is problematic. Marlene Warner added that the mental health infrastructure needs to be reviewed as a whole and that gambling should be incorporated into it.

Mark Vander Linden stated that he will post upcoming meetings in the MGC comments section. Co-Chair Crosby requested comment from our whole list of contacts.

*Having no further business, Co-Chair Crosby ended the meeting. Michael Sweeney made the motion to adjourn, seconded by Jennifer Queally. Motion passed 4-0 as Rebekah Gewirtz departed before the conclusion of the meeting.*

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

1. Public Health Trust Fund Executive Committee, Notice of Meeting and Agenda dated March 7, 2018
2. Public Health Trust Fund Executive Committee, Meeting Minutes dated January 10, 2018
3. FY19 OPGS Budget-FINAL
4. FY19 MGC Budget\_Final dated February 28, 2018
5. MGC Funded Research Projects\_2018