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

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**Date/Time:** May 9, 2018 – 1:00 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  
Enrique Zuniga, Co-Chair, Commissioner, Massachusetts Gaming Commission  
Jennifer Queally, Undersecretary of Law Enforcement  
Michael Sweeney, Executive Director, Massachusetts State Lottery Commission  
Rebekah Gewirtz, Executive Director of the National Association of Social Workers, MA Chapter and Representative of the Massachusetts Public Health Association

**Attendees**

Marlene Warner, Executive Director, Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling  
Victor Ortiz, Director of Problem Gambling Services, Massachusetts Department of Public Health  
Teresa Fiore, Program Manager of Research and Responsible Gaming, Massachusetts Gaming Commission  
Mark Vander Linden, Director of Research and Responsible Gaming, Massachusetts Gaming Commission  
Giles Li, Executive Director, Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center  
Susanne Bernadelli, Assistant Director of Programs and Services, Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling  
Sarita Hudson, Director of Programs and Development, Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts  
Anna Yu, VP of Client Services, KHJ Brand Activation  
Tod Brubaker, VP/Creative Director, KHJ Brand Activation  
Caitlin Dodge, Chief Operating Officer, ThinkArgus

**Call to Order**

1:11 p.m. Co-Chair Tucker called to order the Public Health Trust Fund Executive Committee (PHTFEC) Meeting and welcomed Enrique Zuniga to his first meeting in which he will serve as Co-Chair of the PHTFEC.

## Approval of Minutes

1:12 p.m. *Michael Sweeney noted that PHTFEC minutes for April 4, 2018 were not distributed in advance. Vote will be delayed until the next meeting.*

## FY19 budget

1:13pm Lindsey Tucker introduced the FY2019 budget and stated that the goal of the meeting was to vote on the budget.

Rebekah Gewirtz asked whether the GameSense budget reflected dollars for Wynn and what the money would be used for. Mark Vander Linden responded that a part of the figure will go towards building the actual GameSense Info Center; however, most of the dollars will be for training and onboarding new staff. Rebekah Gewirtz asked if there would be any overlap within the communications campaigns and strategies sponsored by the DPH and MGC. Co-Chair Zuniga responded that the audiences of the two campaigns are extremely different so there is not a lot of room for overlap. Victor Ortiz explained that within the context of prevention, having multiple communication strategies are necessary to address early intervention all the way to messaging within casinos. Rebekah Gewirtz added that the PHTF should support programs which target policy and environment.

Michael Sweeney stated that he continues to struggle to digest the [large] funds allotted for the GameSense program within the overall budget, and hopes that we are able to migrate funding to other programs that benefit the broader community. In particular, he added that there should be more dollars put towards “special population research”. Jennifer Queally added that while special populations have been identified, she is not seeing action and assumes that the intent of the communications campaigns will address these different audiences as opposed to GameSense which she believes is more of an intervention program. Michael Sweeney stated that there is a balance within the agenda and is not comfortable that for all of the population, the best place for prevention and intervention is within the casino setting. He added that he is interested in using PHTF resources for community initiatives in addition to GameSense and cited the success of public health ‘barbershop’ prevention programs as the type of on-the-ground initiatives he is interested in.

Co-Chair Zuniga responded that in the past, rigid messaging targeting gamblers had an opposite effect, and that GameSense represents a real evidence-backed shift in thinking. Co-Chair Tucker agreed that there is value in GameSense, although members could benefit from more detail and a presentation of the full evaluation should take place during the next PHTFEC meeting in July. In particular, she would be interested to know whether GameSense works equally for different populations.

Co-Chair Zuniga stated the original intent was to not have high overhead in the formative years of the PHTFEC. Co-Chair Tucker explained that DPH personnel costs were not fully captured in the current budget and that additional information and an additional request to the group for consideration will be brought to the July meeting.

### **Public Comment**

Marlene Warner of the Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling read Chapter 23K Section 58 which establishes the basis for the PHTFEC. She stated that dollars within the budget are coming from gamblers and are meant to address problems both inside and outside of the casino. The intent is to allocate resources where people are affected by problems and believes that there is a spectrum of programs to be put out.

Giles Li of the Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center stated that Massachusetts is better situated than other parts of the country to have this conversation. He questioned how effective GameSense is for special populations as well as how impactful the research will be for special populations as level funding will only allow illustrative as opposed to an instructive output.

Sarita Hudson reminded the group that her organization, the Public Health Institute of Western MA, conducted a Health Impact Assessment before the opening of any casinos in Massachusetts. She questioned how the PHTFEC and GameSense would engage local partners and stakeholders who are key in informing cultural thinking and competency.

Michael Sweeney shared his disappointed that there seems to be a competition forming, and that no comment can be made about GameSense without eliciting strong visceral reaction. He clarified that he does not have a problem with the program; rather he does not believe that the only point of

impact should be within the casino particularly when there is opportunity at other community settings. He further added that a lot of work was put into a budget which in its current form, only presents level funding for the special populations research work, and for that reason would prefer a delay in budget vote. Rebekah Gewirtz stated that she had to leave and supports a delayed vote.

Jennifer Queally suggested a cost benefit analysis be conducted to determine per person cost to measure effectiveness of the GameSense program. Co-Chair Zuniga proposed adding dollars to the special population table to move forward with the vote. The majority of the executive committee decided to postpone the vote.

## **Communications Campaigns**

Caitlin Dodge of ThinkArgus introduced the communication campaign targeting Men of Color with a History of Substance Misuse for which her agency was contracted to develop for the Department of Public Health. She stated that research was conducted in order to inform the campaign and noted that many participants connected to “I” statements, which informed the development of their creative strategy.

Jennifer Queally questioned whether Gamblers Anonymous (GA) would be promoted within the campaign. Caitlin Dodge explained that the helpline is more heavily promoted within the campaign at the recommendation of the focus groups; however, organizations such as GA would be mentioned elsewhere within the campaign through other mediums.

Co-Chair Tucker added that at the heart of the campaign are individuals with a history of substance misuse, with men of many races hopefully responding to the messaging.

Marlene Warner asked whether there would be an attempt to talk to individuals outside of the chosen recovery centers as the members of this particular center may not be representative of the larger recovery population. She added that in her experience, individuals who make up these types of groups often use the term gambling to mean ‘scratch tickets’ and not casinos themselves. Caitlin Dodge responded that her team had met with one additional group not from a strict recovery center.

Anna Yu introduced the GameSense communications campaign for which her company, KHJ, has been contracted by the Massachusetts Gaming Commission to develop. She stated that the campaign includes a relaunch of GameSense at Plainridge Park Casino in accordance with the new GameSense brand standards, the launch of GameSense at MGM Springfield and an introduction of GameSense to the Western Massachusetts market.

Tod Brubaker, KHJ, provided examples of proposed creative and stated that the intent of the campaign is to improving messaging to drive audience to GameSense Advisors. Jennifer Queally stated that she did not like the example of the elevator decal which from her perspective looks like it is promoting alcohol abuse.

Co-Chair Tucker asked how the proposed concepts were being tested and requested review by people of multiple backgrounds. Anna Yu responded that the proposed concepts are part of a heavily weighted digital plan, which will provide the ability to track and optimize the campaign including for individuals with a diverse background.

Michael Sweeney asked about the ways in which language and cultural diversity will be incorporated into the program, and added that he encourages the proposed creative as it pushes beyond a stereotypical government campaign which are often designed on the 'safe' side.

### **DPH Program Update: Program Gambling & Suicide Prevention**

Having taken up more time on the FY2019 budget than anticipated, Co-Chair Tucker moved directly to public comment.

### **Other Business**

(See above comment)

### **Public Comment**

3:54 Sarita Hudson, Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts thanked the PHTFEC members for the ability to provide public comment on behalf of the Western Massachusetts community and wants to ensure that their voices are heard. She represents the Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts which has been holding meetings to build on the Western Massachusetts Casino Health Impact Assessment originally authored by her organization. The sentiment heard at these meetings has been that the health related initiatives to-date focus on individuals and their families but not necessarily on the broader community. She circulated a letter which can be found at the end of these minutes.

Giles Li, Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Association reiterated his concern that while GameSense is the most evidence based intervention available to date, it is unclear whether it is impactful with special populations. He further expressed concern that level funds for year two funding of special population research may only result in illustrative and not instructive study.

4:00            *Co-Chair made a motion to adjourn. Michael Sweeney seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-0 as Rebekah Gewirtz had to leave before the end of the meeting.*

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

1. Public Health Trust Fund Executive Committee, Notice of Meeting and Agenda dated May 9, 2018
2. Public Health Trust Fund Executive Committee, Meeting Minutes dated April 4, 2018
3. FY2019 Budget
4. GameSense Public Health Committee Meeting dated May 9, 2018
5. DPH\_Problem Gambling Initiatives dated May 9, 2018
6. Letter to the PHTFEC from Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts dated May 9, 2018 (attached)



**Public Health Trust Fund  
Executive Committee members  
May 8, 2018**

Dear Executive Committee Members:

Thank you for your important oversight of the Public Health Trust Fund and for creating this public comment opportunity.

The Public Health Institute of Western MA (formerly Partners for a Healthier Community, Inc.) led the Health Impact Assessment of the Western MA Casino published and presented to the MA Gaming Commission in 2013. We were honored to be able to inform some of the policy discussions taking place at that time both locally and on a statewide level.

The four issues that we focused on in that HIA were *jobs and employment, access to local casino gambling, traffic, and crime/public safety*. We found a likely mix of positive and negative impacts on health determinants and health outcomes and noted that the extent to which the effects manifested were dependent on the type of local and regional multi-sector based strategies put in place to promote positive impacts. We also noted that strategies should be both evidenced based, informed by local residents, and culturally responsive to local and regional context.

Over the past many months, we have begun convening a multi-sector group of stakeholders to understand, now five years later (2018) what new issues and concerns might be coming to the surface that we should address as the casino opening is close approaching. Issues that have been highlighted include:

- *Crime/Violence*, specifically domestic violence and human trafficking;
- *Policing practices*, we anticipate that new practices in proximity to the casino location will have negative impacts on communities of color;
- *Barriers to Employment*, specifically for residents that have a criminal record and those residents that would benefit from skill building systems as well as addressing other barriers to employment including explaining the preferred vendor status and options for covering upfront cost of gaming license such as payroll deduction after hiring;
- *Transportation* particularly in light of the current situation of regional transit authorities being cut;
- *Problem gambling* and ensuring that self-exclusion procedures for problem gamblers at a regional level are evidenced base and informed by community input and responsive to community needs;

- *Traffic /Air quality* – Springfield was just named the “asthma capital of the nation”- any new traffic will exacerbate the high rates of asthma (double the state); and lastly,
- *Housing displacement* from gentrification, not just in the South End where MGM is located, but across the City there is already increased rental costs and evidence of displacement and lack of services.

The Public Health Institute of Western MA is a “backbone” organization that has over two decades of experience in leading public health coalitions and systems and environmental changes. **We recommend that any funding strategy put in place by the Public Health Trust Fund support what we know to be three critical elements for the success of any multi-sector convening to address broad based population health issues such as problem gambling and the public health issues that are both causal and correlated with problem gambling:**

- 1) Efforts must be based in appropriate local community based organizations that have history of impactful work and expertise;
- 2) Any prioritized strategies and research being implemented locally need to be informed and monitored by resident leaders who organically will bring a lens of cultural responsiveness and understanding of local capacity, assets and needs;
- 3) Funded efforts should be aligned with current and existing efforts of both public health plans and easily identified metrics and trackable health indicators.

The second important issue we bring to your attention is that we insist that there be some **formal mechanism in place to ensure that there are equitable distribution of funds to Hampden County**, consistently reported the least healthy county of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts based on both quality and length of life indicators. We want to be assured that the funding in the Public Health Trust Fund will return in amounts that are appropriate to address problem gambling and the already alarming health outcomes, particularly experienced by residents of color in Springfield and Holyoke, which we anticipate will be exacerbated by the casino. There is a history of resources being more heavily distributed in Eastern Massachusetts and we feel it is very important that the Public Health Trust Fund honor that Hampden County, in particular Springfield, will be greatly impacted and deserving of significant funding to mitigate negative impacts.

I respectfully submit these comments and look forward to joining you at future meetings as together we lift up the positive impacts and mitigate negative outcomes from this new venture that the Commonwealth has taken on.

Sincerely,



Jessica Collins  
Executive Director