

Western Massachusetts Casino Task Force Meeting

MINUTES – December 2, 2009 MONSON MUNICIPAL OFFICE BUILDING

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER: 7:02 PM

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Edward Harrison, with the following Task Force members present:

A. 1. Attendance:

- | | | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Belchertown | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Michael Reardon | <input type="checkbox"/> | Jerry Grasso |
| Brimfield | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Diane Panaccione | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Carol DeINegro |
| Brookfield | <input type="checkbox"/> | Rudy Heller | <input type="checkbox"/> | Richard R. Green |
| Hampden | <input type="checkbox"/> | John D. Flynn | <input type="checkbox"/> | Raymond P. Korny |
| Holland | <input type="checkbox"/> | Lynn Arnold | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Kathleen C. Norbut |
| Ludlow | <input type="checkbox"/> | Darlene Cincone | <input type="checkbox"/> | George Backus |
| Monson | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Edward S. Harrison | <input type="checkbox"/> | Mary Tzambazales |
| Palmer | <input type="checkbox"/> | Paul Burns | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Peter Krawczyk |
| Sturbridge | <input type="checkbox"/> | | <input type="checkbox"/> | Robert Weitz |
| Wales | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Michael Valanzola | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Ware | <input type="checkbox"/> | William Braman | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Warren | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Bob Souza | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| West Brookfield | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Barry Nadon, Jr. | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Wilbraham | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | John Pearsall | <input type="checkbox"/> | |

2. Pioneer Valley Planning Commission:

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Timothy W. Brennan | <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | James M. Mazik | <input type="checkbox"/> | |

3. Others:

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| | Representative Todd Smola | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| | Representative Anne Gobi | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |

SECTION I: MINUTES

	<u>Motion</u>	<u>2nd</u>	<u>For</u>	<u>Opp.</u>	<u>Abs.</u>
October 28, 2009	D. Panaccione	M. Valanzola	7	0	0

Mr. Edward Harrison called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. and asked if there were any comments or corrections to the October 28, 2009 meeting minutes. None were forthcoming and these meeting minutes were approved by those Task Force members who were present at the October 28th meeting.

Mr. Harrison stated that the purpose of today's meeting was to meet with the local legislators who serve the 15 towns represented by the Western Massachusetts Task Force, and he acknowledged that Representative Todd Smola and Representative Anne Gobi were in attendance. Mr. Harrison further noted that the Task Force had distributed a letter to Massachusetts legislators as well as members of the Joint Committee on Economic Development and Emerging Technologies, and to date he had not received any responses to this correspondence. Additionally, Mr. Harrison stated that the most pressing area of concern for the Task Force is the need for a cost benefit analysis regarding the impact of casinos in this area.

Ms. Kathleen Norbut then asked each Task Force member to introduce themselves. Following introductions, Ms. Norbut asked Mr. Harrison to give a brief history of the Task Force. Mr. Harrison explained that the Task Force was founded in August 2007 when it was purported that Western Massachusetts was once again under consideration as a potential site for casino development. At that time, the Monson Select Board became concerned that there might be dire consequences to the Town of Monson if a casino was established in Palmer and therefore this Board mailed a letter expressing this concern to the surrounding communities. As a result of this effort, most of these towns eventually joined together to create the Western Massachusetts Casino Task Force to address the impacts of expanding gaming on potential host towns and surrounding communities.

Ms. Norbut explained that the Task Force maintains a neutral stance on expanded gaming but it is united in its concerns for the region and each of its communities. She further stated that a great deal of the Task Force's work had been to delve into Governor's Patrick's proposed legislation. Ms. Norbut commented that the Task Force had found many inconsistencies in the Governor's bill and observed that local government had no say regarding expanded gaming in their area. Ms. Norbut then emphasized the importance of an independent cost benefit analysis and explained that without this study it would be difficult to determine how to offset the various expenditures which will be incurred by communities should a gaming facility be established in the area.

Representative Todd Smola said that it is clear the original bill filed by Governor Patrick a few years ago is no longer under consideration. He then commended the work of the Task Force because of its regional perspective. Representative Smola further stated that he supported the concept of an independent cost benefit analysis and noted that this was long overdue. He also explained that his responsibility in terms of legislation is to do his best to ensure that fundamental safeguards are built into the language of any potential bill. Representative Smola then brought up the topic of mitigation funds and explained that it is impossible to offset all the negatives when building a casino. Additionally, Representative Smola commented that he believed the legalization of casino gaming is not a certainty in Massachusetts and noted that a lot of concessions will have to be made in order to get enough votes in the House of Representatives and Senate before this becomes a reality.

Following Representative Smola's remarks, Mr. Harrison commented that the 23 points of concern listed in the Task Force's letter to the legislators could be applied any region that is considering the establishment of a gaming facility in its area. Representative Smola agreed and assured Task Force members that the Joint Committee on Economic Development and Emerging Technologies has its letter and stated that the Joint Committee has a great deal of information from other parties that it needs to review. Representative Smola then noted that there are a lot of unknown quantities regarding the effect of casinos on cities and towns so it would be difficult to anticipate all the impacts. However, there are ways to set up proper regulations for regional mitigation.


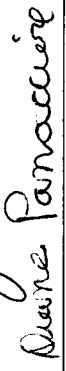
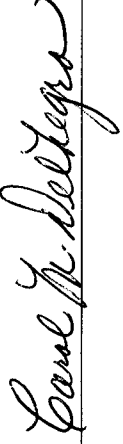



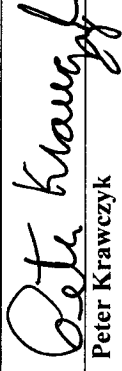
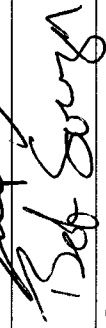
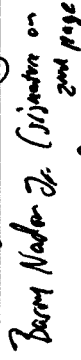


Representative Anne Gobi stated she thought that eventually some form of casino legislation will be passed and observed that there are other communities that may welcome the establishment of casinos. Ms. Norbut expressed her dismay that given the information available regarding the negative impacts of casinos the Commonwealth is still pursuing the legalization of casinos. Representative Smola then stated that the reality is there are several Massachusetts legislators who are convinced that casinos are a good thing for Massachusetts.

Mr. Norbut then read a letter Senator Stephen Brewer had asked to be shared with the Task Force. This letter was addressed to Senator Karen Spilka, Chair of the Joint Committee on Economic Development and Emerging Technologies. In this letter, Senator

Brewer requested that an independent cost benefit analysis be conducted relative to expanded gaming in Massachusetts before a casino bill is released out of her committee.

Mr. Harrison thanked Representatives Smola and Gobi for their time and input to the group, and Ms. Norbut asked them to educate their colleagues on this important issue. Representatives Smola and Gobi thanked the Task Force for their hard work and for keeping legislators so well informed and stated that they will do their best to make sure that the Task Force's concerns is heard. The group then agreed that the next meeting would be held Wednesday, January 27th. Mr. Harrison then adjourned the meeting without objection at 8:10 p.m.

Western Massachusetts Casino Task Force Meeting
 Wednesday, December 2, 2009
 Sign-in Sheet

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Signature</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Signature</u>
Belchertown	Michael Reardon		Jerry Grasso	
Brimfield	Diane Panaccione		Carol Del Negro	
Brookfield	Rudy Heller			
Hampden	John D. Flynn		Richard R. Green	
Holland	Lynn Arnold		Raymond P. Kornly	
Ludlow	Darlene Cincone			
Monson	Edward S. Harrison		Kathleen C. Norbut	
Palmer	Paul Burns		George Backus	
Sturbridge				
Ware	William Braman		Mary Tzambazkis	
Wales	Michael Valanzola		Peter Krawczyk	
Warren	Bob Souza			
West Brookfield	Tom Long		David Eisenthal	
Wilbraham	John Pearsall		Robert Weitz	
PVPC	Tim Brennan		Jim Mazik	