

# Western Massachusetts Casino Task Force Meeting

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**MINUTES – January 30, 2008**  
**MONSON FREE LIBRARY**

**MEETING CALLED TO ORDER: 7:05 p.m.**  
**MEETING ADJOURNED: 8:30 p.m.**  
**Motion to Adjourn – G. Matta; 2<sup>nd</sup> - G. Grasso**

**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"/> | Gerry Grasso (7:20 p.m.) | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Michael Reardon    |
| Brimfield   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Diane Panaccione         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Carol DelNegro     |
| Hampden     | <input type="checkbox"/>            | John D. Flynn            | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Richard R. Green   |
| Holland     | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Lynn Arnold              | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Raymond P. Korny   |
| Ludlow      | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Darlene Cincone          | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Mike Szlosek       |
| Monson      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Edward S. Harrison       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Kathleen C. Norbut |
| Palmer      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | David E. Whitney         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Paul Burns         |
| Sturbridge  | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Arnold Wilson            | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Steve Halterman    |
| Ware        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Gerald Matta             | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Steven Boudreau    |
| Warren      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Bob Souza                |                                     |                    |
| Wilbraham   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | John Pearsall            | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Robert Weitz       |

2. Pioneer Valley Planning Commission:
- |  |                                     |                    |
|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------|
|  | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Timothy W. Brennan |
|  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | James M. Mazik     |

3. Others:

**SECTION I: MINUTES**

	<b><u>Motion</u></b>	<b><u>2<sup>nd</sup></u></b>	<b><u>For</u></b>	<b><u>Opp.</u></b>	<b><u>Abs.</u></b>
1/9/08	B. Souza	D. Panaccione	9	0	1 (D. Whitney)

**SECTION II: NEW BUSINESS**

1. PVPC Comments

Mr. Mazik distributed two versions of how the section on the Western Massachusetts Task Force could be set up on PVPC’s web site. He noted that the PVPC web site has been revised to list partners, and the Western Massachusetts Task Force can be posted in this section. In it a description of the task force, its mission statement and goals can be listed. Additionally, there can be headers at the top of the page which can list the towns, the representatives for each town as well as contact information, a meeting schedule and minutes. Task force members can submit web site updates to PVPC staff. There was general agreement that there should be a link to a “members” section for the task force which could connect to a list of task force members and their contact information. After the content for the web site has been reviewed and approved at the next meeting it can be posted on the PVPC web site.

2. Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) Annual Meeting

Mr. Harrison noted that a few Western Massachusetts Task Force members met with the Board of Select Chair Nancy Yeats of Lakeville at the MMA Annual Meeting. She is also the chair of the Casino task force for the southeast region. There were also casino task force members from Plymouth. It was agreed upon at this meeting that the concerns of the two committees could be combined and that a meeting should be scheduled with Theresa Murray, President of the Senate. One of the Plymouth selectman contacted Ms. Murray and is in the process of setting up a meeting. However, Ms. Murray's ground rules are that only three people could attend. Therefore, no representatives from Western Massachusetts will be able to be present although task force members could submit their input for this meeting. The group concluded that the Western Massachusetts Task Force should try to arrange for its own meeting with Ms. Murray.

Mr. Harrison also mentioned that the Western Massachusetts group met with John Scibak of South Hadley. He is on the committee that the bill will go to and will conduct the hearings. Mr. Scibak noted that it looks as if the casino legislation will be addressed by March and decided upon one way or the other by June 30<sup>th</sup>.

3. Lakeville Meeting

Mr. Harrison observed that in reviewing the minutes from the last Lakeville meeting, this group appeared to be focused on tribal issues and is looking at an environmental impact statement. This is a requirement of the federal government because the Native Americans in this area are pursuing two paths: a federal trust as well as bidding on the casino as a commercial enterprise.

Ms. Norbut observed that when looking at Chapter 40B, which is the 10 percent threshold for affordable housing, mobile housing stock is only credited at ½ of a unit. She stated that the Monson Board of Selectman voted unanimously to request Senator Stephen Brewer and Representative Mary Rogeness to submit legislation to change the formula from 0.5 to 1.0. In this way, Monson would have some power as a municipality to manage growth. Ms. Norbut distributed copies of the legislation and encouraged members to see if their boards and councils would consider supporting it.

4. Palmer Meeting with Developers

It was noted that the bulk of the discussion at the Palmer meeting with the developers consisted of the development of a 160,000-square-foot casino and a 600-room hotel. The developers fielded several questions from the audience but seemed to be deliberately vague. They did commit to meet with other towns in the region at a future date through the casino committee in Palmer and via a public hearing.

**SECTION III: UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

1. Continue Review of Governor Patrick's Proposed Legislation

During this discussion the following concerns were raised:

- The budgetary data is insufficient
- There should be a data driven process to determine what the impact is on communities that might conceivably receive mitigation funds.

- The language regarding licensing fees and operating licensing payments is confusing. There needs to be clarification in the bill as to what is meant by “licensing fees” and “operating licensing payments”.
- There should be language that provides indemnity for law suits against towns.
- There should be some sort of mitigation protection regarding casino-related town legal fees.
- There was concern expressed regarding loss of local control.
- There needs to be regional representation on the board of directors.
- There is vague language on whether or not the trustee of the mitigation funds makes the final determination on the extent of the actual mitigation.
- There needs to be an appeal process if the state overrules the mitigation.
- The cost of impact studies should not be paid by the town.
- The following concerns were raised as mitigation factors that should be addressed in the legislation:
  - Increased traffic.
  - The need for more language and special education teachers due to an increase in population.
  - Increased housing, emergency services, and law enforcement.

#### **SECTION IV: OTHER BUSINESS**

The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, February 13<sup>th</sup>. The meeting after this one, Wednesday, February 27<sup>th</sup>, will be used to finalize the document listing the group’s concerns.