



February 18, 2010

Chairman Karen Spilka
Joint Committee on Economic Development & Emerging Technology
State House, Room 511-C
Boston, MA 02133

Chairman Brian Dempsey
Joint Committee on Economic Development & Emerging Technology
State House, Room 42
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chairman Spilka and Chairman Dempsey:

The MetroWest Growth Management Committee, the 495/MetroWest Partnership, and the South West Advisory Planning Committee have convened a working group of representatives to advocate for adequate, timely and ongoing evaluation and mitigation of the local and regional impacts of a potential casino. The following issues and impacts have been identified by the working group as high priority concerns for our region. While not taking a position in favor of, or opposed to gaming, we believe that it is essential that the concerns be addressed in any legislation regarding development of casinos or other gambling facilities in the Commonwealth.

Prior to finalizing any gaming legislation, or at least prior to siting any gaming facilities in the state, we urge the Legislature to have prepared a cost-benefit analysis of gaming as an economic development tool, with specific chapters focused on the particular issues facing different parts of the state where a casino might be authorized to locate. The analysis should include consideration of the secondary economic impacts on existing businesses as well as the opportunity costs of gaming, by comparing its fiscal benefits and costs with an alternative land use consistent with the economic market of the host region. For example, in the I-495 area, gaming could be compared with the development of a suburban office park or biotechnology facility. The legislation should then be designed to maximize the benefits and minimize the costs. If the legislative timeline does not permit this complete analysis to be undertaken prior to passage, we strongly recommend preparation of a statewide cost-benefit analysis with identification of how the State would be divided regionally for hosting a gaming site. Alternative land-use analysis, specific to a region, could be undertaken during the municipal review and MEPA process.

As to the legislation itself, we recommend that specific language be included to address the following critical issues:

ZONING/LAND USE: It is critical that all communities maintain local control over zoning, project review and the permitting of any gaming development proposals and spinoff developments within their borders, through its zoning by-laws and community permitting process. Because of the limited financial and professional resources available to many communities in the MetroWest region and throughout the Commonwealth, assistance in the form of financial and professional support should be made available to potential host communities to assist in the review of any specific proposals made.

MEPA: Care should be taken to fully retain the MEPA review process and authority. Consideration should be given to granting standing to host and surrounding communities to comment on and participate in the determination of the adequacy of any proposed mitigation.

ACCESS: Any full destination/resort casino(s) in this region should rely upon interstate highways and suitable state highways as opposed to local roads for vehicular access, and must be integrated into a regional public transportation network. Travel on state highways for access to any casino should be minimized, and traffic impacts fully mitigated by the casino development.

GAMING COMMISSION/REGIONAL REPRESENTATION: The Legislature should appoint at least one voting member from each region which hosts a gaming facility to any state-level gaming commission. Such representation will ensure that host regions have input on decisions impacting the communities that they represent, and can serve as liaisons to the communities.

DISTRICT MITIGATION TRUST FUNDS/COMMITTEES: The Legislature should establish a Mitigation Trust Fund (MTF) for each district that will host gambling/gaming facilities. An MTF would provide financial resources to impacted communities that would enable them to mitigate the local and regional development impacts and any increased demand for services. The impacts should reflect data-driven fiscal costs. The cost-benefit analysis prepared prior to the legislation should be refined to reflect conditions at the selected site(s) in order to determine fiscal impacts for each selected site.

Each MTF should be fully funded from state license and tax revenues prior to use or diversion of any state revenues from gambling/gaming for other state initiatives. The legislation should also protect taxpayers and regions from lost revenues due to reduction in state subsidies currently provided from lottery receipts and local aid.

District Mitigation Oversight Committees (MOC) would be established to oversee the allocation/dispersal of MTF Funds and to annually conduct data-driven reviews of the regional impacts and costs. The legislation should provide for the funding of annual assessments of relevant impacts. The district committees (MOC's) should comprise one member each from the host community, abutting communities, and abutters to abutting communities, one member from a state-level gaming commission if such an entity is formed, one member from each

Regional Planning Agency to which the member communities belong. The Chief Elected Official of each city or town would appoint its representatives to the district MOC. The legislation should provide for expansion of the number of member communities, upon receipt and review of data that establishes that there is good cause for inclusion of the community, based on a demonstrated significant level of local impact. The MOC should be the entity that has the authority to add members, by majority vote.

Each MOC should be entitled to staff in order to accomplish its obligations under the statute, compensated via the aforementioned license and tax revenues. Each MOC should be permitted to engage staff from one or more RPAs and/or other regional organizations in the affected region to provide staffing support.

MITIGATION: We recognize that the host community, and to a lesser extent, abutting communities, will have opportunities throughout the siting and approval processes to establish the need for and request/require sufficient mitigation. Most major initial impacts should be addressed through the local approval process and MEPA. However, we also recognize that some impacts will be unaddressed at the time of construction (especially for the non-host communities), unanticipated or experienced post-construction, including some that involve municipal service delivery. These are the impacts that we believe the MOC can address through trust fund revenue. Such categories of funding may include the following, if it is demonstrated that the impact is due, in whole or in part, to the gaming facility:

- **Transportation:** Mitigation for highway and local roadway traffic impacts within and beyond the host community, such as road widening, turning lanes, signalization improvements, traffic calming measures, or occasional staffing requirements; such impacts should explicitly be allowed to fund improvements to the public transit system, bicycle or pedestrian infrastructure, where appropriate.
- **Environment:** Mitigation of the impact on natural resources that cannot reasonably be avoided, including stormwater management across municipal borders, loss of open space and increases in enforcement costs to affected communities.
- **Infrastructure:** Infrastructure costs required to support the proposed development, such as: road/bridge improvements, utilities, upgrades to water/sewer facilities, water quality/quantity issues, etc.
- **Municipal Services:** Mitigation for the impact on public safety (police, fire, emergency medical services) including service capacity, response time, quality and cost of service, personnel, materials and equipment, vehicles, translators for non-English speakers, and compatibility with state police technology and equipment.

- **Housing:** Mitigation for the impact on housing demand and availability/production, including affordable housing, as well as increased building/housing/health code enforcement costs.
- **Education:** Mitigation for the impact on local school costs for all impacted communities, including personnel, materials and equipment, facilities, transportation, as well as for special education, and English as a Second Language.
- **Social Programs:** Mitigation in the form of social programs for the impacted communities dealing with the social impacts of gaming/gambling on the region.

We realize that you will be addressing the casino legislation in the very near future and would appreciate your attention to the issues raised in this letter. It is critical to protect not only the host community but the entire region from the inevitable land use and municipal service impacts of casino gambling in the Commonwealth.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues in more detail and look forward to seeing the actual legislation as soon as it is available for review.

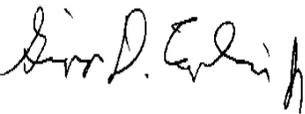
Sincerely,



Ken Solderholm
Executive Board Chairman, MetroWest Growth Management Committee



Dennis Giombetti
Public Sector Co-Chair, 495/MetroWest Partnership



Gino Carlucci
Chairman, South West Advisory Planning Committee

cc: Governor Deval Patrick
Lt. Governor Tim Murray
Senate President Therese Murray
Speaker Robert DeLeo
Majority Leader Frederick E. Berry
Majority Leader James Vallee
Chairman Steven Panagiotakos
Chairman Charles Murphy
495/MetroWest Legislative Delegation