

MASSACHUSETTS RESTAURANT PROMOTION COMMISSION

Minutes from the Fourth Meeting of the Commission
Holyoke Community College- MGM Culinary Arts Institute
January 6, 2020

Commissioners in Attendance:

Chairperson Keiko Matsudo Orrall, Executive Director, Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism
Pat Lee, Owner and Operator, Horseshoe Grille
Bob Luz, President and CEO, Massachusetts Restaurant Association
Representative Paul McMurtry, Eleventh Norfolk district in the Massachusetts House of Representatives
Ted Twinney, Co-Founder and Manager, Start Line Brewing Company
Tiffani Faison, Chef and Owner of Sweet Cheeks Q, Tiger Mama, Fool's Errand, and Orfano (**on phone**)
Christopher P. Jamison, Co-Founder, COJE (**on phone**)

Commissioners not In Attendance:

State Senator Julian Cyr, Cape and Islands District
Rebecca Roth Gullo, President, Gallows Group
Senator Edward J. Kennedy, First Middlesex District in the Massachusetts Senate
Kathi Maino Turner, Turner Seafood Companies

Other Attendees:

Peter Tomyl, Mohawk Trail Association
Mary Kay Wydra, GSCVB
Mike Hurwitz, UNOs
Rachel Kaprielian, U.S. Government Relations, McDonald's Corporation
Marc Wilhelm, Wheatleigh
Kathy Bell, Murphy Donoghue Partners
Garrett Burns
Mick Corduth
Tania Leichliter, Miles Partnership
Peter Platt
Gabrielle Gould, Amherst Business Improvement District
Pat Duffy
Tessa Murphy-Romboletti, Executive Director, EforAll- Holyoke, MA
Patrick Bench, Benchmark Strategies
Stacy Graves, MGM Culinary Arts Institute
Kristine Ricker Choleva, Interim Dean Business and Technology Division, Holyoke Community College
Jeremy Clowe, 1Berkshire
Rory O'Hanlon, Executive Office of Housing & Economic Development
Daniela De Caro-Heavey, Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism

The fourth meeting of the Massachusetts Restaurant Promotion Commission ("the Commission") occurred at the Holyoke Community College MGM Culinary Arts Institute, pursuant to notice being duly given under the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law.

Chairperson Keiko Matsudo Orrall called the meeting to order at 10:04 A.M.

Commissioners Lee, Luz, Twinney, and Representative McMurtry were present. Commissioners Faison and Jamison called into the meeting on the conference line. Commissioners Gullo, Turner, Senator Kennedy and Senator Cyr were not present.

Chairperson Orrall invited Kristine Ricker Choleva, Interim Dean Business and Technology Division, Holyoke Community College, to provide testimony.

Ms. Ricker Choleva provided testimony on the culinary level program offered at Holyoke Community College. Details provided include:

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- Only College-level comprehensive culinary program in the area
- Program is accredited by the American Culinary Federation (ACF); Challenges to maintaining accreditation

Commissioner Luz inquired if there was a partnership with placing students at MGM. Ms. Ricker Choleva replied that the partnership is ongoing in terms of placing students in jobs at MGM.

Commissioner Twinney asked Ms. Ricker Choleva to speak to the digital learning programs offered at the MGM Culinary Arts Institute. Ms. Ricker Choleva replied that the MGM Culinary Arts Institute is focusing on how to be intentional with online learning so that students can maximize their time properly.

Commissioner Lee inquired what the MGM Culinary Arts Institute would look for in terms of assistance from the industry. Ms. Ricker Choleva replied that there are less than 50 graduating students per year, and thinks that specific programs that may align and provide opportunities for students who are already working.

Chairperson Orrall asked Rachel Kaprielian, U.S. Government Relations, McDonald's Corporation to testify.

Ms. Kaprielian provided testimony on the McDonald's Archways to Opportunities program:

- Available to every McDonald's employee after 90 days of employment
- Program has four components: English Under the Arches, High School Completion Program, College Degree, Education Advising
- Tuition assistance available- \$2,500/year grant available to employees; \$3,000/year grant available to managers
- Over 24,000+ McDonald's employees have received assistance
- \$3.25 million in Archways higher education grants throughout New England

Representative McMurtry commented that his first job was at McDonald's, and he believes that the Archways to Opportunities program is a great program that he would like see modelled at other restaurant chains and fill a void in the workforce and educational training. A follow up discussion on training opportunities and incentives ensued.

Commissioner Twinney asked Ms. Kaprielian about benefits offered for entry level workforce at McDonald's. Ms. Kaprielian replied that the franchised company has competitive wages and is trying to remind people that with early work experience and good customer service experience, you can move on to do almost anything in the workforce. Ms. Kaprielian went on to note that a Holyoke McDonald's was one of four restaurants that won a 'Ray Kroc Award' and a 'Howdy Award for Hospitality Excellence.'

Commissioner Luz inquired about where the funding for the Archways for Opportunities program is coming from. Ms. Kaprielian replied that it is a corporate program and discussed additional job related expenses that the program covers as well.

A discussion ensued with Representative McMurtry and Ms. Kaprielian regarding corporate and franchise McDonald's stores in Massachusetts.

Chairperson Orrall asked if there was any further testimony, and Representative Aaron Vega offered testimony to the group regarding restaurant entrepreneurship. Representative Vega proposed the following questions: 1. How can we incentivize current restaurant owners to open up a second location in Western Massachusetts and 2. How can old buildings be re-purposed, as restaurant rehab costs are very high.

Chairperson Orrall opened the floor to public comment:

Ms. Tessa Murphy-Romboletti, Executive Director of EforAll in Holyoke, MA offered public comment. She stated that she works with entrepreneurs who face challenging economic backgrounds, and her organization assists them with resources and support to turn their ideas into profit. She mentioned that her program offers an accelerated program and mentorship for entrepreneurs. Ms. Murphy-Romboletti noted that Western MA faces unique challenges, limited commercial space, and that it is crucial to be mindful of opportunities for funding.

Commissioner Twinney asked Ms. Murphy-Romboletti what the organization's biggest challenge is. Ms. Murphy-Romboletti replied that the biggest challenges are networks.

Commissioner Lee asked how the organization is sourcing mentors. Ms. Murphy-Romboletti stated the challenges of this task, and discussed that it mostly occurs by word of mouth once impact is realized.

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Chairperson Orrall asked about the size of the organization. Ms. Murphy-Romboletti noted that 58% of the entrepreneurs assisted by EforAll are still active in operating businesses.

Commissioner Luz asked which percentage of the businesses are food based. Ms. Murphy-Romboletti noted that 40% are food-based organizations, many being food trucks.

Ms. Tanya Leichter of Miles Partnership, offered public comment. She testified that she believes that there should be an educational portal to assist businesses become better digital promoters. She stated that she is looking for support from the Commission for funding to develop webinars and information to foster new workforce and new roles such as a digital marketer within the restaurant.

Commissioner Lee discussed the challenges to people who began businesses prior to the digital age. Commissioner Twinney noted that he couldn't imagine having a business today without understanding the digital footprint.

Mr. Peter Platt offered public comment. Mr. Platt discussed the challenges that small businesses face with the existing Tip Act, and asked that members of the Legislature make changes to the law.

A discussion ensued with Representative McMurtry, Commissioner Jamison, and Commissioner Lee. Representative McMurtry encouraged Mr. Platt to reach out to his state representative or state senator. Commissioner Lee noted that unintended consequences may occur because of a law, and recommended that Mr. Platt join the Massachusetts Restaurant Association, which sends notifications to members when changes are made to laws or regulations.

Mr. Marc Wilhelm of Wheatleigh offered public comment. Mr. Wilhelm stated that small properties cannot afford to provide healthcare for all. He also mentioned that not all organizations are aware of laws regarding pay to employees on holidays.

Commissioner Luz stated that Mr. Wilhelm brings up great points, and that he would have the Massachusetts Restaurant Association reach out to him to provide information on Massachusetts Employment Law.

Ms. Gabrielle Gould, Executive Director of the Amherst Business Improvement District, provided public comment. Ms. Gould inquired about marketing dollars to help make Amherst a destination instead of a drive-by or drive-through destination.

A discussion ensued with Chairperson Orrall and Commissioner Luz regarding marketing initiatives.

Commissioner Luz moved to review and approve the meeting minutes. Chairperson Orrall mentioned that there was not a quorum of Commissioners physically present, in order to approve the meeting minutes. Commissioners agreed to review the minutes from the December 17, 2019 meeting at the next meeting of the Restaurant Promotion Commission occurring later in January.

Commissioner Twinney asked for an update from The Ripples Group, the consulting firm chosen by the Commission.

Mete Habip, Partner at The Ripples Group, discussed the approach of interviewing relevant stakeholders and holding focus groups throughout regions in Massachusetts. Mr. Habip also stated that The Ripples Group has pulled together two questionnaires for employees and customers, which will be utilized to collect more data to better inform Commission members.

Chairperson Orrall stated that the next meeting of the Restaurant Promotion Commission will take place on January 28 in Lowell, at Middlesex Community College's Academic Arts Center.

Commissioner Luz suggested a topic for discussion at the next meeting to look how tourism is funded in general.

Chairperson Orrall thanked the Commissioners. She motioned to adjourn at 11:55 AM, approved by all Commissioners.

Handouts for this meeting:

1. Commission Meeting Agenda
2. Minutes from the third meeting of Restaurant Promotion Commission – 12.17.19
3. Archway to Opportunity presentation- accompanying printout of presentation made by Rachel Kaprielian, U.S. Government Relations for McDonald's Corporation

Recorded by Daniela De Caro-Heavey, Special Projects Manager, Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism, January 6, 2020.