

MASSACHUSETTS RESTAURANT PROMOTION COMMISSION

Minutes from the Seventh Meeting of the Commission
Scargo Café

799 Main Street, Dennis, MA

February 24, 2020

Commissioners in Attendance:

Chairperson Keiko Matsudo Orrall, Executive Director, Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism
Senator Julian Cyr, Cape and Islands District
Senator Edward J. Kennedy, First Middlesex District in the Massachusetts Senate
Pat Lee, Owner and Operator, Horseshoe Grille (**on phone**)
Bob Luz, President and CEO, Massachusetts Restaurant Association
Kathi Maino Turner, Turner's Seafood Companies
Ted Twinney, Co-Founder and Manager, Start Line Brewing Company
Representative Paul McMurtry, Eleventh Norfolk district in the Massachusetts House of Representatives (**on phone**)

Commissioners not In Attendance:

Christopher P. Jamison, Co-Founder, COJE
Rebecca Roth Gullo, President, Gallows Group
Tiffani Faison, Chef and Owner of Sweet Cheeks Q, Tiger Mama, Fool's Errand and Orfano

Other Attendees:

Tonia Tassinari, Executive Office of Housing and Community Development
Jeffrey Soares, Aide to Senator Cyr
Daniela De Caro-Heavey, Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism
Steve Clark, Massachusetts Restaurant Association
Mete Habip, The Ripples Group (**on phone**)
Wendy Northcross, Cape Cod Chamber

The seventh meeting of the Massachusetts Restaurant Promotion Commission ("the Commission") was held at the Scargo Café in Dennis, MA, pursuant to notice being duly given under the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law.

Chairperson Keiko Matsudo Orrall called the meeting to order at 12:09 P.M.

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

Chairperson Orrall announced that the Commission meeting was being voice recorded. Chairperson Orrall then asked the present commissioners to introduce themselves, and motioned to approve the meeting minutes from February 11, 2020. All Commissioners approved the minutes at 12:14 P.M.

Chairperson Orrall stated that she would like to entertain testimony from the public.

Chairperson Orrall invited Michael Pillarella, Executive Chef at the Wianno Club to provide testimony.

Details provided include:

- Attending the Commission meeting to represent local chefs and two of the issues that he feels are affecting businesses in the Cape Cod region.
- First issue: Affordable housing for workforce, where middle management can stay and raise their families
- Second issue: Workforce training and missing key components of trained labor
- Goal is to work as a team to maintain, keep, and house the workforce

Senator Cyr asked Mr. Pillarella to speak to the current workforce, both seasonal and year-round at the Wianno Club. Further details on Mr. Pillarella's testimony include:

- Stated that his organization has a deep talent pool that comes from the H2B Visa Program
- The number of local staff his organization has is limited as most do not have the funding to purchase homes in the Cape Cod region
- Workforce moves off the Cape for more affordable living as there is no affordable housing for middle management

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- Key for longevity workforce on the Cape is local housing

Commissioner Turner inquired how restaurants build this cost of housing employees into their budget. Mr. Pillarella replied that they do not, and funding comes from over and above the budget. He went on to state that many restaurants are struggling.

Senator Kennedy inquired where Mr. Pillarella's organization's staffing comes from, and how many the organization retains. Mr. Pillarella noted that 30 of 38 members of his organization's staff come from the H2B Visa Program. A discussion ensued regarding lack of training for outside talent and lack of housing to maintain staff, amongst Commissioners Luz and Orrall, and Senators Cyr and Kennedy.

Chairperson Orrall invited Wendy Northcross, CEO, Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce, to provide testimony. Details provided include:

- Highlighted retired workforce
- Multiple restaurants in Cape Cod region
- Need for more people to dine during the off season
- Suggested a special restaurant fund created by the state

A discussion ensued regarding marketing dollars, and seasonal dining with Commissioner Luz, Senator Cyr, and Ms. Northcross.

Ms. Olive Chase, owner of Casual Gourmet, offered public testimony. Details provided include:

- Restaurants/Employers need to continue to pay employees in the winter to maintain highly trained employees
- Small independent businesses are being negatively affected by the raise in minimum wage
- Suggested that the state come up with a business opportunity zone for workforce housing

A discussion ensued with Senator Cyr, Commissioner Luz, Ms. Northcross, and Ms. Chase, regarding the effects that raising the minimum wage is having on small independent businesses.

Commissioner Turner inquired if there was a natural balance of resident population once the busy season starts. A discussion ensued with Ms. Northcross and Commissioner Turner regarding affordable housing.

A public comment was made regarding the idea of having a training wage in Massachusetts. A group discussion ensued.

Mr. Domenic Bachand, Chef/Teacher at Cape Cod Technical High School offered public testimony:

- Has taught teenagers for 20 years
- Housing for middle management is difficult
- 50-60% of graduating seniors will go into the industry and hospitality, most don't stay in Cape Cod
- Suggested offering incentives on the state level for student housing subsidiaries if they stay and work on the Cape

Mr. Bill Catania, offered public testimony. Details included:

- Stated that restaurants are being charged to collect taxes
- Need for legislation that helps the restaurant industry

Senator Cyr asked members of the public to give feedback on the effects of local permitting, licensure and that the cumulative effects of legislation differ in different parts of the state. A group discussion ensued.

Commissioner Turner stated that the Commission had heard a lot of feedback regarding a lack of an online database on how to create a restaurant. Ms. Northcross mentioned that the Cape Region has a "roadmap template" for permitting. Senator Kennedy suggested that it is a good idea to have all of the forms online, which would be necessary to open a new restaurant or maintain an existing restaurant. A group discussion ensued regarding the expansion of a natural partnership with Counties that would solidify a standard of restaurant requirements.

Chairperson Orrall provided a brief update on existing surveys on massvacation.com. She then closed the floor to public comment at 1:25 P.M., and opened up the discussion amongst the Commissioners. Chairperson Orrall stated that the focus of the discussion is on tourism, workforce and cross-promotional partnerships. Commissioner Turner stated that she has heard a lot about training wage, teen wage, and training workforce.

Senator Kennedy noted that the report to the legislature should address the regulation process, making sure culinary programs are promoted, that the legislation that raised the minimum wage is an issue, and promote restaurants in general.

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Commissioner Luz and Commissioner Twinney discussed the tip wage and a seasonal business-training wage. A discussion ensued amongst the group. Senator Cyr suggested that wage issues be very specific and granular in the recommendations. A group discussion ensued regarding promoting the restaurant industry as a career workforce.

Chairperson Orrall asked if there were further comments from the Commission to consider.

With no further comments, Chairperson Orrall made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 1:48 P.M, take a 10 minute break, and reconvene for executive session. Motion approved.

Handouts for this meeting:

1. Commission Meeting Agenda
2. Minutes from the sixth meeting of the Restaurant Promotion Commission– 2.11.20
3. Snapchef Proposal

Recorded by Daniela De Caro-Heavey, Special Projects Manager, Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism, February 24, 2020.