

MASSACHUSETTS RESTAURANT PROMOTION COMMISSION

Minutes from the Ninth Meeting of the Commission

Zoom Conference Video Call

Wednesday, February 24, 2021

1:00 p.m.

Remote Zoom Conference Participation:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84725843889?pwd=UGZveUo5bjBjd251UjZVd1padUdSQT09>

Meeting ID: 847 2584 3889

Passcode: 8pKuVT

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

Garrett Burns, on behalf of State **Representative Paul McMurtry**, Eleventh Norfolk District

Tiffani Faison, Chef and Owner of Sweet Cheeks Q, Tiger Mama, Fool's Errand and Orfano

Pat Lee, Owner and Operator, Horseshoe Grille

Bob Luz, President and CEO, Massachusetts Restaurant Association

Christopher P. Jamison, Co-Founder, COJE

Rebecca Roth Gullo, President, Gallows Group

Kathi Maino Turner, Turner's Seafood Companies

Ted Twinney, Co-Founder and Manager, Start Line Brewing Company

Other Attendees:

Mark Fuller, Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development

Daniela De Caro-Heavey, Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism

Rory O'Hanlon, Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development

Tonia Tassinari, Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development

Michael Quinlin, Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism

Pat Johnson, Senator Cyr's Office

James Ostis, Senator Kennedy's Office

Tyler Cotta, Representative Carol Fiola's Office

Natalie Massey, Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism

Lauren Menzie

Trish McCarthy

Anne Perkins

Rachel Kaprielian

The ninth meeting of the Massachusetts Restaurant Promotion Commission ("the Commission") occurred via Zoom Conference Video Call, pursuant to the suspension of certain provisions to the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law, in response to the State of Emergency declaration by Governor Baker due to the Coronavirus. Notice regarding remote participation was duly given to all meeting participants, including the Commission Board Members and the public.

Chairperson Keiko Matsudo Orrall called the meeting to order at 1:03 P.M.

Commissioners Orrall, Senator Kennedy, Lee, Luz, Turner, Gullo, Jamison, Burns for Representative McMurtry, Faison, and Twinney, were present. Senator Cyr joined later in the meeting.

Chairperson Orrall then asked the present Commissioners to introduce themselves, and motioned to approve the meeting minutes from March 9, 2020. All Commissioners approved the minutes.

Chairperson Orrall introduced Mr. Mark Fuller, Undersecretary for Business Growth, Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development. Mr. Fuller discussed the following:

- Nearly a full year since COVID-19 landed in Massachusetts and changed the way we are living and working
- Extremely challenging time for businesses across the Commonwealth. Restaurants in particular have been extremely hard hit.

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- Restaurants have shown tremendous grit to make adjustments, including following COVID-19 sector specific protocols and investing in protective equipment
- With the encouraging trends in public health data, the Baker-Polito Administration is evaluating the sector specific guidance as we prepare to move forward.
- Vaccination is a big part of getting back to work. The state is expecting an uptick of 139,000 doses of the vaccine next week with supply continuing to expand moving forward.
- Critical assistance programs have been made available including the PPP program, 8% of that went to restaurants, a current 2021 PPP round available, small business recovery loans, shared streets program, and the MGCC business relief grant program has issued approximately \$182M in grants to restaurants.

Commissioner Jamison asked Mr. Fuller if there is a metric as to when restaurants will be operating without restrictions. Mr. Fuller replied that it has been data driven over the past year and not date driven.

Commissioner Gullo asked Mr. Fuller about the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine to the restaurant industry. She went on to state that the grants received by restaurants have been given to utility bills and landlords, and suggested more state support on vaccinations, including clearer guidance and communication.

A discussion ensued between Commissioner Gullo and Mr. Fuller. Commissioner Gullo noted that she felt that there needs to be a more coordinated the vaccine rollout plan for the hospitality industry. Mr. Fuller commented on the different layers of the phased vaccination approach along with vaccine supply. He also noted the focus on mass vaccination sites, and informed Commissioner Gullo that he would take the feedback received back to the vaccination team.

Chairperson Orrall thanked Mr. Fuller, and moved forward with a discussion on the Draft Report (“Report”) to the Legislature. Chairperson Orrall noted that the MA Office of Travel and Tourism would like to move forward with a restaurant marketing campaign to support the restaurant industry. She went on to note that the restaurant marketing campaign will go along with the MA Office of Travel and Tourism’s successful “My Local MA” campaign. Chairperson Orrall opened up the discussion for thoughts from Commissioners.

Commissioner Jamison stated that the report would be remiss if it does not expand on the challenges faced by the restaurant industry due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and asked if there is an opportunity to submit more poignant and targeted recommendations to the Report. A discussion ensued with Commissioners Jamison, Faison, Turner, and Luz regarding additional recommendations to include legislative issues such as: tip credit, tip pooling, allowing PPP funding received by restaurants in Massachusetts to be tax deductible, and significant impacts made by takeout and delivery to full service restaurant business models.

A group discussion continued regarding the proposed restaurant marketing plan, and thoughts on the path forward for the Commission. Details included:

- Supporting the restaurant industry by lobbying utility companies
- Concerns on the messaging relative to the restaurant marketing campaign
- Short term focus on urgent goals necessary
- Reprioritizing recommendations as a group to include cost control, more loans, and vaccinations
- Boosting consumers’ confidence that it is safe to come back into the restaurants

Mr. Fuller suggested the submission of addendums to the Report by the Commissioners, and a restaurant marketing campaign as a path moving forward to reflect the progress that the restaurant industry is making. Commissioner Luz commented that this messaging is important in highlighting all of the positive steps that restaurants have made to ensure COVID-19 safety compliance. A group discussion ensued.

Chairperson Orrall noted the legislative mandate of the Commission to submit the Report, moving forward with the addendums, and the associated monetary deadline. Commissioners Jamison, Turner, Luz, and Lee discussed seeking legislative approval to extend both the Commission and the Report’s filing. Senator Kennedy stated that he would look into both of these provisions. Chairperson Orrall noted this consensus.

Commissioner Luz made a motion to extend the Commission and asked legislators that are on the Commission to move forward with getting legislative approval in order to do so.
Motion approved.

Chairperson Orrall deferred to Senator Kennedy as to a timeline when the extension could be approved. Senator Kennedy stated that he would seek clarification from the Senate’s Ways and Means Committee.

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Commissioner Luz made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion approved and meeting adjourned at 2:09 PM.

Handouts for this meeting:

1. Commission Meeting Agenda
2. Minutes from the eighth meeting of the Restaurant Promotion Commission– 3.9.20
3. Draft report: Restaurant Promotion Commission

Recorded by Daniela De Caro-Heavey, Special Projects Manager, Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism, February 24, 2021.