

MINUTES

NEW HIGHMARK STADIUM COMMUNITY BENEFITS OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

December 10, 2024

Frank E. Merriweather Jr. Library Branch
1324 Jefferson Ave, Buffalo, NY 14208
Tuesday, December 10, 2024; 5:30 – 7:30PM

The CBOC, a committee established to provide monitoring, oversight, and accountability in connection with the performance of the Community Benefits Agreement (“CBA”), hosted its **first public hearing**. As mandated by the CBA, available at: https://www3.erie.gov/law/sites/www3.erie.gov.law/files/2023-03/bills_community_benefits_agreement_execution_version.pdf, the purpose of the hearing was solely to discuss community priorities. Public comment at the hearing was limited to agenda items and subject to three (3) minutes per individual commenter.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1 Welcoming Remarks by Chairman Blue, beginning at 5:33PM

Chairman Blue welcomed community members to committee’s first public hearing at the Merriweather Library in East Buffalo. He informed attendees that meeting agendas and reports were available at the entry and noted that the public would have an opportunity to provide comments, which were limited to 3 minutes per person. Chairman Blue also encouraged attendees that may not have an opportunity to speak to submit their comments in writing.

Chairman Blue closed agenda item 1.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 2 Call to Order and Establish Quorum

Chairman Blue established that a quorum of the committee was present for the meeting.

Chairman Blue closed agenda item 2.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3 Community Benefits Updates

Chairman Blue introduced Member Penny Semaia, Community Benefits Director, for a community benefits presentation.

Member Semaia introduced himself as the Community Benefits Director and Vice President of Stadium Relations for the Bills, expressing his excitement for the first public hearing and thanking attendees for their participation. Member Semaia began by highlighting that the CBA represents a significant investment by the Bills and Developer of over \$140 million over the next 33 years.

COMMUNITY BENEFITS AGREEMENT OVERVIEW

Member Semaia introduced the following information on the objectives of the CBA, the Community Investment, as well as the roles and responsibilities of the CBOC:

- **Community Benefits Agreement:**
 - The Community Benefits Agreement (the “CBA”), entered into as of March 29, 2023, among Buffalo Bills, LLC (the “Bills”), Bills Stadium and Events Company, LLC (the “Developer”), Erie County Stadium Corporation (“ECSC”) and the County of Erie (“County”), was developed

to ensure participation by all segments of the local community in the economic opportunities available in connection with the design, construction, maintenance and operation of the New Highmark Stadium project (“Project”).

- Key stakeholders include (i) the Bills; (ii) the Developer; (iii) ECSC; and (iv) the County.
- Per the CBA, the Bills and the Developer are charged with making an annual Community Investment approximating a value of at least Three Million U.S. Dollars (\$3,000,000.00), adjusted annually by the Price Index, for the programs and objectives described in the CBA and to support the social, educational, and economic health of the Region.
- The CBA’s objectives include, among other things:
 - (A) fostering workforce inclusion and diversity in the Project;
 - (B) addressing Prevailing Wage and Living Wage requirements;
 - (C) enhancing supplier diversity and providing County business-priority for supplier and vendor contracts;
 - (E) supporting affordable housing, food insecurity, educational access, social justice, and mental health initiatives in the County;
 - (F) providing for commitments to local civic and other organizations;
 - (G) furthering the Developer’s cooperation in the economic development of the County; and
 - (H) furthering the Developer’s commitment to support youth and community programs in the County.
- Community Investment:
 - The Bills and Developer retain autonomy over processes related to the Community Investment and have allocated several means by which community members may submit inquiries and requests:
 - Visit buffalobills.com for Donation and Sponsorship Requests
 - Direct Inquiries to the Community Benefits Director – penny.semaia@bills.nfl.net
 - Community Benefits Oversight Committee Meetings
- Community Benefits Oversight Committee:
 - As required by the CBA, ECSC and the County created the community benefits oversight committee (the “CBOC”) in consultation with Developer. The CBA defines and limits the powers and authority of the CBOC. Per the CBA, the CBOC must:
 - (i) meet at regularly scheduled intervals (including an annual public hearing) and/or at the call of the chair in a public setting to discuss community priorities
 - (ii) review Developer’s compliance with the terms and conditions of the CBA;
 - (iii) provide monitoring, oversight, and accountability in connection with the performance of the CBA (e.g., reviewing the Bills’ spending of the Community Investment in relation to the community’s needs);
 - (iv) receive and review reports from Developer relative to the CBA’s progress and Developer’s good faith efforts to implement the programs contemplated by the CBA; and
 - (v) collaborate with the Bills and Developer to identify community vulnerabilities and priorities

Member Semaia then reviewed the dates and locations of prior meetings, the monthly meeting day for the CBOC, and where meetings are advertised. He also highlighted the availability of meeting notices, meeting minutes, agendas, materials, annual reports, and the CBOC directory. A QR code linking to Erie County’s website was provided for easy access:

- Meeting Dates and Locations
 - February 26, 2024 – Existing Highmark Stadium, Orchard Park, NY

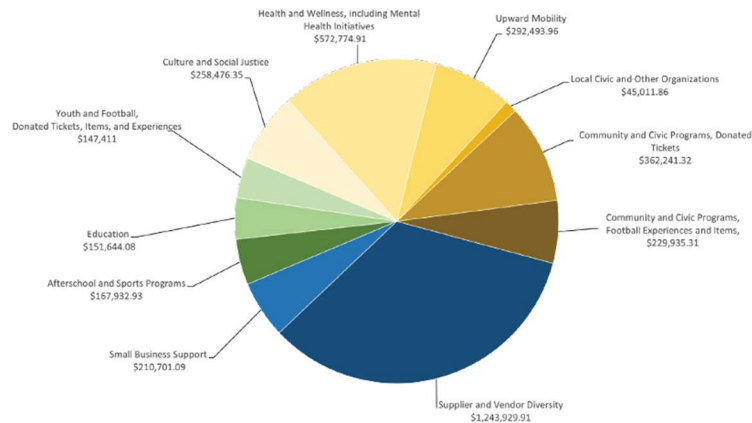
- April 22, 2024 – Downtown Central Library, Buffalo, NY
- July 8, 2024 – Downtown Central Library, Buffalo, NY
- August 12, 2024 – ECC North Campus, Williamsville, NY
- September 9, 2024 – Buffalo State University, Buffalo, NY
- October 15, 2024 – Existing Highmark Stadium, Orchard Park, NY
- November 12, 2024 – Downtown Central Library, Buffalo, NY
- December 9, 2024 – ECC North Campus, Williamsville, NY
- CBOC meets the 2nd Monday of each month (*Tuesday thereafter in the event of a federal holiday)
- Notice and Advertisements
 - Posted at Erie County Rath Building, ECC City Campus, ECC South, Erie County Website
 - Distributed to Papers of Record: Buffalo Challenger, Grand Island Dispatch, East Aurora Advertiser, Lancaster Bee, The Criterion
 - Distributed to News Media Outlets: WUFO, Buffalo News, WIVB, WKBW, WGRZ, Spectrum News
 - Posted on [BuffaloBills.com/news/stadium-news](https://buffalobills.com/news/stadium-news)
- Erie County Community Benefits Oversight Committee Website
 - Visit <https://www3.erie.gov/eo/community-benefits-oversight-committee>
 - Access to Meeting Notices, Meeting Minutes, Meeting Agendas, Meeting Materials, Annual Reports, and CBOC Directory

COMMUNITY BENEFITS UPDATE

Following this brief overview, Member Semaia shared the following highlights from the Annual Report:

- Community Investment Fiscal Year 2023
 - Member Semaia presented that the Buffalo Bills spent \$3,682,553 in the Western New York region during the first year of the Community Benefits Agreement. The Community Investment for Fiscal Year 2023 (which includes investments specific to the CBA and excludes additional community investments by the Bills that are not part of the CBA) is as follows:

Community and Civic Programs	\$1,760,934
Health and Wellness	\$572,775
Donated Tickets	\$362,241
Upward Mobility	\$292,494
Culture and Social Justice	\$258,476
Football Experiences and Donated Items	\$229,935
Local Civic and Other Organizations	\$45,012
Economic Development	\$1,454,631
Supplier and Vendor Diversity	\$1,243,930
Small Business and Economic Inclusion	\$210,701
Youth and Education	\$466,988
Afterschool and Sports Programs	\$167,933
Education	\$151,644
Donated Tickets, Items, and Experiences	\$147,411
Total Community Investment FY 2023	\$3,682,553



- Community and Civic Programs

- **Culture and Social Justice:** Commitment to empowering diverse communities and supporting inclusive initiatives with focus on social justice, cultural awareness, celebrations, and opportunities for change, including initiatives such as Inspire Change, Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo, Salute to Service, Holiday Outreach, New Stadium Accessibility Planning, Peacemakers Breakfast, 5/14 Commemoration, Black History Month, Hispanic Heritage Month, Native American Heritage Month, United Way Day of Caring, Women’s History Month, Buffalo Pride, National Gay Flag Football League
- **Health & Wellness, including Mental Health Initiatives:** Support of health and wellness initiatives in WNY to increase access to essential resources with focus on improving public health outcomes and fostering mental and physical well-being, including initiatives such as Mental Health Awareness, You Are Not Alone Campaign, BillsHeartBEAT, Crucial Catch, Make-A-Wish, Stop the Violence Coalition, ECMC Foundation, Oshei Children’s Hospital of Buffalo
- **Upward Mobility:** The Bills and Buffalo Bills Foundation support organizations improving quality of life in the region with a focus on addressing child hunger, increasing access to nutritious food, promoting healthy eating, and supporting affordable housing initiatives, including Huddle for Hunger, Community Food Drive, and the Thanksgiving Blitz
- **Local Civic and Other Organizations:** Support of local civic and community-based organizations that benefit area residents and strengthen the community with focus on community investment in resources and support for various causes, including initiatives such as Give716 Day, My Cause My Cleats

- Youth and Education

- **Afterschool and Sports Programs:** Support of afterschool and sports programs that provide youth with enriching, community-based activities, including opportunities to engage in tackle and flag football as well as facilitate the use of facilities by community organizations and schools for sporting events and activities that benefit the broader community, including initiatives and programs such as the Boys & Girls Club of Buffalo, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Erie, Niagara & Southern Tier, USA Football Summer Blitz, Bennett High School State Championship Celebration, Play Football Celebration, High

School Coach of the Week Program, Tapestry Charter School Field Opening, Toyota Rookie Club Flag Football Clinic, Seneca One Buffalo Sports Day, Gatorade Unified Flag Clinic, High School Girls Flag Football, NFL Play-60

- **Education:** The Bills are committed to empowering youth and supporting educational initiatives that promote equal access to high-quality education through scholarships, sponsorships, and volunteer efforts. Bills staff actively engage as guest lecturers, speakers, mentors, and volunteers in educational programs. Education involvement and initiatives include Scholarships, Grants, and Education Support, SUNY Erie: Men of Merit Mentorship Program, SUNY Erie: Guest Speaker Series, SUNY Erie: Sports Management Guest Lecture. A College Internship Program and High School Shadowing Program are each in the strategic planning phase

Member Semaia shared the following regarding Post Construction Operation:

- Developer shall use commercially reasonable efforts to implement initiatives for maximizing participation in the maintenance and operation of the New Stadium, including, without limitation, aiming to achieve the following goals:
- Maintenance and Operations
 - 30% and 6% of all retailers, vendors, and service companies used in stadium maintenance and operations to be MWBE and SDVOB firms, respectively
 - 30% and 6% of all monies paid to retailers, vendors, and service companies used in stadium maintenance and operations be paid to MWBE and SDVOB firms, respectively
- Concessions
 - 30% of the food products used by the concessionaire to be purchased from Erie County certified MWBE food service companies
 - Preference given to food and beverage items for sale at New Stadium produced and/or manufactured in New York State
 - Require the concessionaire to administer food and beverage service mentorship programs for MWBEs

Member Semaia then continued sharing highlights of the annual report:

- Economic Development
 - **Taste of Diversity Program:** The Bills partnered with Erie County and SUNY Erie to launch the "Taste of Diversity" pilot program, a six-week initiative that trained five MBE restaurants in a fast-paced, stadium-like concession setting. The participating vendors included EM Tea, Coffee Cup Café, Golden Cup Coffee, Manna Culinary Group, Radah Baked Goods, and Crenshaw's Chicken & Waffles.
 - **Diversity Shop:** In partnership with the Buffalo Sabres and Bills, eight MBE retailers showcased their products at select Sabres games in KeyBank Center. The participating vendors included Najah Corporation, Skincare Essentials by Jill, Elle James Decor, Black Monarchy, Melanin Skyn Co., Skinny Wick Candle Co., Nikki's Chocolates WNY, and Charm Handmade Jewelry.
 - **Legends Hospitality Workshop:** The Bills partnered with Level Up to host an expo and workshop at Highmark Stadium, giving Level Up participants the opportunity to present their businesses to Legends Hospitality. Legends Hospitality, which will provide food, beverage, and retail offerings at the New Highmark Stadium, participated in the event.
 - **Continued Progress:** Member Semaia noted that ongoing meetings, planning, and research are being conducted regarding efforts related to post-construction operations and economic development.

Member Semaia noted that elected officials emphasized the importance of focus in these efforts, which led to the hiring of MBE Modern Times Inc., regional MWBE AARWC, and Developments by JEM (DBJ), along with an economic impact manager. He mentioned that DBJ provided a vision for engaging the community and being intentional in guiding initiatives and objectives, and that they are here to support the community's involvement and help steer these efforts.

DBJ provided an update on recent participation and programming aimed supporting MWBE SDVOB businesses and workforce development:

- The MWBE Round Table Discussion, presented by the Division of Minority and Women's Business Development in collaboration with the regional office of WNY, focused on offering guidance and resources to help businesses succeed
- DBJ also highlighted efforts of the Opportunity and Awareness Huddles in South Buffalo and East Side Buffalo, where community members had the chance to meet with the GT project team and discuss upcoming work opportunities
- Additionally, DBJ discussed the "Be Your Own Hero" event presented by the Buffalo Bills at Highmark Stadium, which engaged over 1,000 individuals interested in construction, with McKinley and Burgard among the participating schools
- DBJ participated in the WUFO Health and Wealth Expo, engaging over 200 attendees with information about the stadium's construction progress. They also distributed surveys to gauge interest in construction careers and trades and provided copies of the Annual Report and Monthly CBOC updates
- One of the key initiatives DBJ emphasized was the "Let's Get Certified!" 5-week program, which is specialized in NYS and County certification. This program has already registered 22 out of 52 pre-screened businesses, with follow-up sessions planned with the additional 30 interested firms. An info session was held on December 4, and another certification session is being planned to help businesses prepare for upcoming opportunities
- DBJ participated as a vendor at the MWBE Training Day & Conference, connecting with 100 attendees and engaging with approximately 30 businesses and contractors to educate and recruit for workforce development efforts
- Additionally, DBJ met with the National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC) to explore collaboration opportunities, focusing on promoting the need for women in construction. This initiative will culminate with special efforts during Women in Construction Month in March 2025

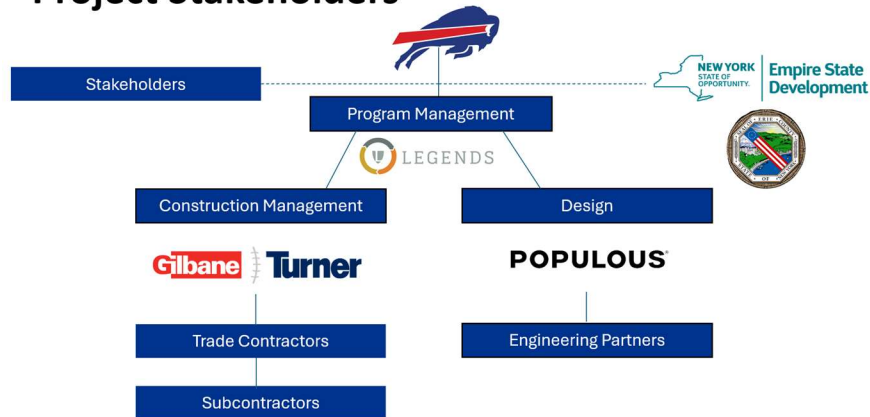
CONSTRUCTION

Member Semaia shifted to an update on Construction:

Member Semaia noted the achievement of a 1-million-hour milestone in work completed by the men and women on the New Highmark Stadium, including a significant number of workers from the region. He highlighted that he would share information regarding the impact of MWBE/SDVOBs and regional certified firms. He also mentioned ongoing work on-site, including the concrete structure being poured 360 degrees around the stadium, the canopy framework with multiple cranes in use, and the beginning stages of interior work.

Member Semaia provided an overview of the various stakeholders involved in the project and its compliance, emphasizing that while Empire State Development is the sole owner of compliance, achieving compliance requires a collaborative effort from the County, the State, and the Developer:

Project Stakeholders



Business Participation & Workforce Compliance Stakeholders



Member Semaia next highlighted the resources and information made available by the Developer. The project website, <http://www.buffalobillsnewstadium.com>, offers a range of tools including the Contractor/Vendor Interest Form Registration, contracting opportunities, events and sessions, and a Construction Opportunity Questions Form. Individuals can contact the project team and receive a response within two business days. The site also features a Resource Center, Frequently Asked Questions, and access to advocacy partners and stakeholder resources, such as Erie County, WNY Be in Business, Empire State Development, and the NYS Office of General Services. Additionally, an Interactive Procurement Guide is available for users. Construction opportunities are advertised through several platforms, including the New York State Contract Reporter, The Buffalo News, Challenger Community News, Buffalo Criterion, Niagara Gazette, and Panorama Hispano.

Member Semaia highlighted the various sessions that have been held to support contractor participation in the project. These included Contractor Information Sessions, which provided an overview of the project, procurement process information, and opportunities for attendees to register their interest in participating. These sessions took place in Buffalo, NY on December 6, 2022, Albany, NY on November 30, 2022, Syracuse, NY on November 29, 2022, and two sessions in Buffalo, NY on November 14, 2022. Additionally, the "Meet the Primes" sessions were held to offer minority-, women-, and service-disabled veteran-owned firms the chance to network with Prime/Tier-1 firms seeking partnerships on proposal packages. These sessions also allowed firms to engage with trade partners pursuing the project. The sessions took place in Orchard Park, NY on March 13, 2024, and several other dates throughout 2023, including

February 15, December 7, November 1, August 2, August 1, April 19, March 28, January 31, and January 24.

Member Semaia highlighted the Opportunity and Awareness Huddles, which are community-based sessions hosted by the project team with prime contractors to share information about upcoming opportunities for regional subcontractors, vendors, suppliers, and professional service providers. Special thanks were given to Erie County Legislature Chairwoman April Baskin and Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz for their efforts to ensure these sessions reached neighborhoods and community spaces across Erie County. The sessions were held in Buffalo, NY on June 11, 2024, and May 22, 2024, and also took place in West Seneca, NY on December 7, 2023, West Buffalo, NY on November 14, 2023, Kenmore, NY on September 21, 2023, Lackawanna, NY on August 29, 2023, North Tonawanda, NY on August 16, 2023, and East Buffalo, NY on August 8, 2023.

Additionally, the Gilbane|Turner project team launched a joint Capacity Building Program aimed at preparing small, regional, and diverse contractors. This program offered workshops focused on the prequalification process, proposal quality, and best practices for responding to RFPs. Member Semaia expressed pride in GT's efforts and the partnerships formed through this program, which supports businesses beyond just the stadium project.

Member Semaia provided an interim update outlining Developer's progress regarding the MWBE/SDVOB business participation and workforce hour objectives relating to the New Highmark Stadium. Member Semaia reported as follows:

- Solely with respect to proposal releases #1-4, Developer has exceeded its business participation commitment goals with respect to MBEs at 16.8% (which exceeds the 15% goal) and WBEs at 16.1% (which exceeds the 15% goal). Developer also reported the following percentage with respect to SDVOB business participation goals: 5.8% SDVOB participation (which falls below the 6% goal). Member Semaia commended the work of the various project stakeholders, stating that many initially questioned whether the goals were achievable. However, he emphasized that the goals are on track to be met and progress is continuing, with intentional efforts to ensure success.

Category	Goal		Through Proposal Release #1-4
Minority-owned Business Enterprise	\$231,000,000	15%	16.8%
Women-owned Business Enterprise	\$231,000,000	15%	16.1%
Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business	\$94,400,000	6%	5.8%
MWBE & SDVOB Total	\$554,400,000	36%	38.7%

- As of Q3 2024, Developer has awarded a total of 322 MWBE/SDVOB contracts or OCSD-4 commitments. 192 of the awarded MWBE/SDVOB contracts or OCSD-4 commitments have been made to Regional MWBE/SDVOBs. 144 of the Regional MWBE/SDVOB contracts or OCSD-4 commitments have been made for a value less than or equal to \$1,000,000, representing results of the Developer's efforts in defining, segmenting or sizing bid packages at levels to increase the likelihood MWBE firms are reasonably able to successfully undertake such projects and to ensure MWBE contractors and/or subcontractors retained for the Project shall come from the Western New York Region.

- MWBE/SDVOB Contracts or OCSD-4 Commitments: 322
- Regional MWBE/SDVOB Contracts or OCSD-4 Commitments: 192
- Regional MWBE/SDVOB Contracts or OCSD-4 Commitments <= \$1,00,000: 144

Regional MWBE/SDVOB Contracts or OCSD-4 Commitments	
< \$99,999	62
\$100,000 – \$249,999	31
\$250,000 – \$499,999	25
\$500,000 – \$1,000,000	26
Total <= \$1,000,000	144

*CBA Section 1.(n) defines Region as the geographic area within the State of New York comprising a 100-mile radius from Orchard Park, New York



- In response to previous requests by the committee, Member Semaia provided the following list of prime contractors, noting that the Developer hires prime contractors, who in turn hire subcontractors, including certified MWBE/SDVOBs:

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PJP Installers, Inc. (MBE) • Mark Cerrone, Inc. • Ferguson Electric / E-J Electric JV • Ferguson Electric / E-J Electric JV • Pinto Construction Services, Inc. • Union Concrete & Construction Corp. • Schindler Elevator Corporation • Source Blue • SubAir Systems • Baker Concrete Construction, Inc. • Cives Steel Company • R. W. Sidley, Inc. • Crown Corr • High Concrete Group • Union Concrete & Construction Corp. • Roger & Sons Concrete, Inc. (MBE) • Celtic Sheet Metal, Inc. (WBE) • Celtic Sheet Metal, Inc. (WBE) • F. W. Sims, LLC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ferguson Electric / E-J Electric JV • Ferguson Electric / E-J Electric JV • John W. Danforth Company • D.V. Brown & Associates • Rael Automatic Sprinkler Co., Inc. • George M. Raymond Co. • William H. Lane Inc. • Irwin Seating Group • Island International Enterprises, LLC • Sightline Commercial Solutions LLC • Crystal Steel Fabricators, Inc. (MBE) • Crystal Steel Fabricators, Inc. (MBE) • Thomas Johnson, Inc. • SwimEx, Inc. (WBE) • SCG Fields, LLC • Jameson Roofing • MTN Inc. • Hamburg Overhead Door, Inc. (WBE) • Builders Hardware | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Group • Allegheny Millwork Inc. • Tiede Zoeller (SDVOB) • FCS Group (MBE) • R.W Painting (WBE) • Superior Steel Door and Trim Co., Inc. (WBE) • GP Flooring Solutions (WBE) • Heritage Contract Flooring, LLC • Rommel Fence, LLC (WBE) • Billitier Electric, Inc. • Design Communications, Ltd. • Scarfari Construction Co., LLC • Union Concrete & Construction Corp. |
|--|--|---|

*BOLD = Regional

For List of Awarded Contractors and Package Descriptions, please visit www.buffalobillsnewstadium.com/contracting-opportunities

- As of October 31, 2024, the Developer has exceeded its minority and apprentice workforce hours, reporting (i) 21.75% for minority work hours (which exceeds the 15% goal) and (ii) 15.01% for apprentice work hours (which exceeds the 10% goal). The Developer also reported the following percentages with respect to non-minority women work hours: (i) 3.67% for non-minority women work hours (which falls just below the 5% target).

Category	Goal	Through 10/31/24
Minority Work Hours	15%	21.75%
Non-Minority Women Work Hours	5%	3.67%
Apprentice Work Hours	10%	15.01%

Member Semaia also discussed the following items:

- Public Transportation Hub:** Ongoing collaboration with NFTA on logistics and location of the Transportation Hub, which will be within 0.25 miles of the New Stadium Complex. The focus is on ensuring easy access for all patrons, including families and those with limited mobility or special needs. Key priorities include visibility, accessibility, and seamless integration with the campus plan. Additionally, the project is exploring unique design opportunities, such as public art and branding elements. More details will be shared as they become available.
- Community Art Program:** Set to launch in Q1 of 2025, will focus on showcasing the talents of regional and local artists, emphasizing the theme "Built for Buffalo by Buffalo." The program aims to represent Buffalo's unique identity within the stadium. In Q1 2025, RFQs will be released with information available for local artists and art groups to apply. Artist Information Sessions will be held across the region to provide details on the application process and selection criteria. The program will be inclusive, with all relevant information, including the Call for Artists RFQs, available on both the stadium and main websites. A panel of selected reviewers will evaluate submissions to ensure the artwork reflects Buffalo's vibrant community.
- Accessibility:** The project is involving a collaborative effort between the Developer, architect, Erie County Office for People with Disabilities, the NYS Chief Disability Officer, and regional disabled community members to ensure ADA-compliant design features are included.

Member Semaia then emphasized the following regarding the Community Investment:

- The Bills and Developer retain autonomy over processes related to the Community Investment and have allocated several means by which community members may submit inquiries and requests
 - Visit buffalobills.com for Donation and Sponsorship Requests
 - Direct Inquiries to the Community Benefits Director – penny.semaia@bills.nfl.net
 - Community Benefits Oversight Committee Meetings

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4 Public Comment Regarding Community Priorities

The public comment period began with brief introductions from the CBOC:

- Penny Semaia, Vice President of Stadium Relations, Buffalo Bills and Community Benefits Director
- Maria Whyte, Chief Community Impact Officer, Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo
- Toni Cannady, Assistant General Counsel, Buffalo Bills and Secretary of the CBOC
- Reverend Mark Blue, President, Buffalo NAACP and Chair of the CBOC
- Franchelle Parker, Executive Director, Open Buffalo

- Frederick, Director of Community Giving and Support, West Herr, and former CEO of People Inc.
- Sean Mulligan, Erie County Legislature
- Mo Sumbundu, Governor's Director of Community Relations
- Todd Starowitz, Director of Stadium and Corporate Communications, Buffalo Bills

Chairman Blue opened the hearing for public comment. Members of the community provided the following comments:

- **Bill Hanrahan, Fire Commissioner with Town of Orchard Park Fire District**, discussed the challenges of protecting the current Highmark Stadium, both when occupied and unoccupied. He explained that the necessary training and equipment are expensive, and the Town of Orchard Park, with a population of 30,000, must accommodate over 100,000 people on game days. Mr. Hanrahan inquired about who to contact for assistance.
- **Annette Lock, Executive Director of Operations at The Salvation Army**, expressed gratitude for the comprehensive and thoughtful agreement, noting the importance of fostering equity. She highlighted that while some communities are experiencing resurgence, others still face significant disparity. Ms. Lock acknowledged that the agreement would bring relief to many targeted groups, particularly in Buffalo, one of the poorest cities, where over 70,000 people are struggling. She urged that housing, shelter, and wraparound services remain a top priority.
- **Melvin Harry** expressed frustration, stating that if the stadium had been located in Buffalo, people from areas like Main, Jefferson, Fillmore, Broadway, and Genesee would be able to attend games.
- **Debbie Mulhern, a representative from the Erie County Restorative Justice Coalition**, thanked the Bills and West Herr for their support and highlighted their collaboration with BPS 131, including Dion Dawkins bringing gifts to students. She emphasized the importance of social and restorative justice, particularly focusing on youth engagement for students involved in issues such as stealing cars or fights, often due to a lack of activities. Ms. Mulhern advocated for efforts to provide safe spaces for kids, address food deserts on the East Side of Buffalo, and strengthen community ties between police, schools, businesses, and residents to promote collaboration and growth.
- **Denise Barr, an advocate in The Fruit Belt and community liaison for Councilwoman Pope**, expressed ongoing disappointment over the Buffalo Bills' departure from the neighborhood. While recognizing the positive aspects of the team's involvement, she emphasized the need for a commitment to return and support the community, especially in the face of poverty. She acknowledged the Bills' efforts as commendable but stressed the urgent need for investment in local organizations, particularly those addressing youth housing insecurity. She warned that if these needs are left unaddressed, 100,000 youth in the city may feel that they are not cared for.
- **Carl Bailey, a filmmaker**, thanked the Bills for their involvement in 5/14, acknowledging it as a very positive step. However, he emphasized the need for more sustainable programs, such as initiatives that teach students to farm and become self-sufficient. Bailey noted that several community members are already working on similar projects in the community, and with the right financial support and influence, these efforts could grow.
- **Devon Patterson, Director of Community Engagement at (Open Buffalo) and co-chair of the Youth Employment Coalition (YEC)**, introduced the YEC, founded in 2019, which supports young people ages 16-24 who are not working or in school. Mr. Patterson emphasized the critical need for youth employment, noting that both locally and nationally, youth are struggling with basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, transportation, and mental and physical health. He called for

increased investment to close the service gap, and stressed the importance of training programs for youth and wraparound services.

- **Julia Palmer, Executive Director of People Against Trafficking Humans (PATH) in the City of Buffalo**, spoke about the growing issue of human trafficking in Western New York. Ms. Palmer shared an example of a young female in the community who was provided with gifts, clothing, and support, demonstrating the care offered by PATH. As the only agency providing all services under one roof, PATH is asking for support to expand affordable housing resources for those they serve.
- **Willie Stewart** expressed concern about the representation of Black individuals in construction trades, noting that while minority participation is reported, it is unclear how many specifically are Black workers. He mentioned that he has not seen the Black community represented on job sites around Erie County.
- **Rachel Rzayev of CB Emmanuel Realty, LLC** echoed the points made by others regarding the state of the City of Buffalo and its residents, and specifically highlighted the comments made by the leader of the Salvation Army. She offered a different perspective, sharing her appreciation for Member Semaia's presentation on the ripple effects of a large capital project like the new stadium. Ms. Rzayev challenged the Bills and CBOC to consider the broader potential ripple effects of such a significant community investment and underscored the importance of ensuring that large capital investments, within agreed-upon boundaries, have a meaningful impact.
- **Dewitt Lee of St. Brian Clothiers** shared that he would submit his full comments in writing. He reflected on how the community came together to mourn and heal after the tragedy on 5/14, requesting a 10-second moment of silence. St. Brian Clothiers emerged from this situation to provide free suits to men in the community. Lee thanked the Sabres for their support in opening the KeyBank Center to help dress young men for prom. He also shared how his large collection of pinstripe suits led to the formation of the "Bills Mafioso," a group of men who dress in pinstripe suits on game days. He also noted his work with the NFTA to add a Gameday Express stop at Utica and Main Street. Mr. Lee recommended adding a museum in the new stadium to honor the Rockpile and celebrate the 60th anniversary of the AFL Championship.
- **Stephanie Peete, Senior Director of Workforce Development at Say Yes Buffalo and YEC**, discussed a national apprenticeship model designed to provide Buffalo Public School graduates with early access to career pathways. These 2-3 year apprenticeship programs, in partnership with local colleges, are aimed at leading to family-sustaining wages. Peete pointed out that, according to the Department of Labor, 170,000 jobs will be available locally over the next 10 years, with two-thirds of them requiring secondary education. She stressed the importance of ensuring access to both jobs and education for youth. Peete also emphasized that wraparound services must remain a priority. Finally, she mentioned that an application process for community investments should be clear and accessible for all organizations to navigate.
- **Taya Stevens, a participant in the Say Yes Buffalo apprenticeship program**, shared her positive experience working at Rich Products. She highlighted the great benefits Say Yes offers, including free schooling and a job at Rich Products. Stevens also mentioned additional support services, such as driving lessons with AAA and housing programs. She suggested further support for Say.
- **Marnetta Malcom, a Jefferson Avenue community advocate and survivor of cardiac arrest**, thanked Member Mo Sumbundu for his help during that critical moment. She expressed her commitment to the Jefferson Avenue community and shared concerns about a lack of information. Ms. Malcom suggested that all relevant information should be centralized in one place and made available year-round, without relying on cell phones. She emphasized the need for better communication with the community, especially on Jefferson Avenue, and called for

greater support from the Bills and the CBOC. She praised Pastor Blue as one of the few pastors who truly cares about the community and stressed the need for sustainable partnerships and unity.

- **Donita Munn** commented that she operates transitional housing for homeless women with two locations and is seeking support. Ms. Munn mentioned that she wrote and was approved for a grant with Roswell and will be partnering to offer community empowerment workshops starting in the spring. She is looking for additional partners to collaborate on this initiative.
- **Odesa Hunter** mentioned that she only found out about the meeting yesterday and that people in the community often find out just the day before. She pointed out that many people in the community either can't read, don't read, or aren't familiar with using computers. She suggested going directly to where people are and using community centers to get information out. She emphasized that this issue extends beyond just this project, but to all community meetings.
- **Nia Warren of Buffalo Futures** expressed that the region's top priority is addressing the needs of youth in the community, specifically those ages 16-24 who are not in school and without jobs. Buffalo Futures, founded in 2023, is a unique physical and virtual employment hub focused on connecting young people to career pathways and training opportunities for family-sustaining jobs with low barriers to entry. She urged the inclusion of Buffalo's opportunity youth in community priorities and emphasized that initiatives must also provide resources to stabilize basic needs. She suggested creating an application process for organizations to access resources.
- **Murry Holman** mentioned an initiative with the county that provides youth with paid work opportunities. He referenced page 9 of the annual report, which notes the Bills support for the Stop the Violence Coalition. He suggested that, when the stadium is covered in snow, the Bills could provide shovels for kids to clean the seats and then give them the opportunity to experience a game.
- **Ajure Harding** reported that in 2023, the City of Buffalo had \$478 million allocated, with 25% or \$100 million designated for MBEs. However, only \$21 million was given to MBEs. Similarly, in Erie County, which had \$1 billion allocated in 2023, only \$21 million went to MBEs, despite a 10% target. Harding questioned how, with these numbers, the community could expect to see meaningful impact from the \$3 million set aside for the CBA.
- **Ben Upshaw** thanked the CBOC for holding the meeting on the East Side, noting that it was very appropriate for this time and place. Mr. Upshaw emphasized the need for continuous investment in the area to reverse this damage and suggested a creative solution: if every Buffalo Bills player with a foundation contributed \$1 million each year for 10 years to Jefferson Avenue projects, it could have a tremendous impact. He pointed out that many Bills players earn over a million dollars, and even a small contribution from each could drastically improve the quality of life in the community. Upshaw urged the Bills organization to consider this idea.
- **Joyce Jamison, a retired Buffalo Public School teacher and member of the Seneca Nation Turtle Clan**, shared a suggestion for the Bills to place more emphasis on the cultural art of Indigenous people and their welcoming of others onto their territory. She highlighted that the Seneca Nation is the "Keeper of the Western Door." Ms. Danielson proposed creating a small cultural village at the new stadium, incorporating elements of Indigenous culture to ensure greater representation and inclusion.
- **Beverly David-Lewis, Director of Capacity Building (with unknown organization) and adjunct professor at RIT**, highlighted the importance of addressing transportation, leadership, cost, and communication as fundamental components needed to ensure the success of children, particularly athletes, who can become positive and responsible leaders, good students, and productive members of society. She emphasized the need to support nonprofit organizations to help ensure children's success, which in turn leads to success in the community. David-Lewis also stressed the importance of making an application process.

- **Diane Takens, Founder and Director of Peace of the City**, expressed appreciation for Member Semaia's transparency and earnestness. She pointed out that nonprofit organizations are speaking on behalf of those who experience economic gaps. Ms. Takens noted the lack of direct and easy transportation from the city to the Bills' stadium and suggested consideration of additional buses for home games. Ms. Takens further proposed that the Bills dedicate a half percent of their annual profits to the city.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5 Adjournment

Chairman Blue thanked the audience for attending and for their valuable input. He provided a recap of the various ways information is shared, including websites, QR codes linking directly to the website, advertisements, and regular updates at each meeting. He also highlighted the use of the newspaper, media, radio, and websites to share meeting details, including local media outlets (e.g., the Criterion, Challenger, WUFO, Buffalo News, and local TV channels (2, 7, and 4), as well as the NAACP for meeting announcements). Chairman Blue further reiterated that CBOC meetings are held on the second Monday of each month at 11:00 AM, with locations announced in advance.