

## MINUTES

### NEW HIGHMARK STADIUM COMMUNITY BENEFITS OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

April 14, 2025

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Harlem Road Community Center  
4255 Harlem Road, Amherst, NY 14226  
Monday, April 14, 2025

The CBOC convened for its twelfth meeting on Monday, April 14, 2025, at the Harlem Road Community Center in Amherst, NY. The meeting was conducted in person and via videoconference and public notice was posted in accordance with NY Open Meetings Laws.

#### **AGENDA ITEM NO. 1**            Call to Order, Roll Call and Establish Quorum

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Blue at 11:05 AM ET. Chairman Blue established that a quorum was present.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**        Mo Sumbundu, Franchelle Parker\*, Chairman Mark Blue, Penny Semaia, Todd Starowitz, Erich Weyant, Maria Whyte, and Toni Cannady – 8

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**        Rhonda Frederick – 1

\*Member Parker was present via videoconference, which per NY OML and the CBOC's video conferencing procedures (available here: <https://www3.erie.gov/eo/sites/www3.erie.gov/eo/files/2024-08/cboc-written-procedures-regardingvideoconferencing-due-to-exigent-circumstances.pdf>) shall not count toward a quorum of the CBOC (although Member Parker was able to participate and vote, given that a quorum of members were present at a physical location open to the public).

*Chairman Blue closed Agenda Item No. 1.*

#### **AGENDA ITEM NO. 2**            Approval of Meeting Minutes from March 17, 2025, CBOC Meeting (Action Item)

Chairman Blue requested a motion to accept the meeting minutes from the committee's prior meeting on Monday, March 17, 2025. Upon a motion by Member Sumbundu, seconded by Member Whyte, and without opposition, the CBOC approved the meeting minutes.

*Chairman Blue closed Agenda Item No. 2.*

#### **AGENDA ITEM NO. 3**            Old Business

Chairman Blue opened the floor for committee members to discuss old business.

1. **Resolution Regarding Community Vulnerabilities and Priorities.** In introducing the agenda item, Member Whyte noted that the Resolution Regarding Community Vulnerabilities and Priorities was laid on the table at last month's meeting, and following some minor amendments, it is now being presented for adoption. Member Whyte recommended moving in favor of adopting

the resolution and indicated a desire to make a few comments. The motion to adopt the resolution was seconded by Member Sumbundu. Before being brought to a vote, Member Whyte and additional CBOC members provided comments pertaining to the resolution (see below).

**a) Comments by committee members**

- i. **Member Whyte** explained that the purpose of the resolution is to name and adopt the community's vulnerabilities and priorities for the 2025–2026 fiscal year. As part of resolution, the CBOC identified that all things related to youth will help serve as the community vulnerability and priority. At last month's meeting, the group discussed how this focus was determined which included referencing themes from the annual public hearing held in December, as well as research conducted by the small working group. Member Whyte introduced a quote from former U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy, who issued an advisory in December 2021 warning about the state of the nation's youth. Member Whyte then read the following excerpt aloud:

“Every child's path to adulthood—reaching developmental and emotional milestones, learning healthy social skills, and dealing with problems—is different and difficult. Many face added challenges along the way, often beyond their control. There's no map, and the road is never straight. But the challenges today's generation of young people face are unprecedented and uniquely hard to navigate. And the effect these challenges have had on their mental health is devastating. We also know that, too often, young people are bombarded with messages through the media and popular culture that erode their sense of self-worth—telling them they are not good looking enough, popular enough, smart enough, or rich enough. That comes as progress on legitimate, and distressing, issues like climate change, income inequality, racial injustice, the opioid epidemic, and gun violence feels too slow.”

Member Whyte further noted that the Surgeon General's advisory highlights and accurately reflects the objective and purpose for why the CBOC felt it was important to recommend youth as a community vulnerability and priority.

- ii. **Member Sumbundu** acknowledged the Developer's willingness to work with the CBOC, noting that the conversations have been very fruitful. He gave kudos to Member Semaia for stepping up to the plate. He noted that it took difficult conversations to get to where the committee is today, and that the resolution truly demonstrates deep and meaningful engagement with the community throughout the public hearing process. He added that the resolution sends a clear message to the community that the CBOC does not only hold hearings, but it welcomes the community's voice and genuinely values the comments brought forth. Member Sumbundu added that the resolution also gives the CBOC a strong foundation to begin working on this year's focus theme: youth services. He noted that the CBOC believes focusing on youth will support a commitment to addressing systemic challenges at their roots, rather than simply treating the symptoms. He went on to say that this approach allows the CBOC to send a clear message to the Developer that youth is the priority the committee would like to focus on moving into the next year. While the resolution recommends Developer prioritize young people, Member Sumbundu also acknowledged that Developer has consistently taken on a wide range of services each year. He commended Developer for its ongoing commitment and the willingness to make youth a priority this year.
- iii. **Member Weyant** voiced his support for the resolution, stating that a focus on youth is a focus on the future. He noted that it sets a 'North Star' for the CBOC, emphasizing that the

resolution is not only about identifying vulnerabilities but also about recognizing and pursuing opportunities. He expressed that he is happy to support it.

- iv. In addition to her earlier comments, **Member Whyte** read the resolved clause of the resolution for the benefit of the public:

RESOLVED, that the CBOC accepts the recommendation of the working group and hereby identifies the large variety of needs experienced by youth and young adults aged 12-29 those living the Disadvantaged Communities as a community vulnerability and priority for the Developer's 2025-2026 fiscal year, which begins on April 1, 2025 and concludes on March 31, 2026; and be it further RESOLVED, that such needs include (but are not limited to): youth employment, job training for youth, youth apprenticeships, mentoring/life skills coaching for youth, financial literacy for youth, wrap around supports (including transportation, food, and housing) for youth, youth mental health, youth sports, after school programming for youth, access to cultural spaces for youth, and any other such thing necessary for youth and young adults in the Region (as defined in the CBA) to thrive.

- v. **Chairman Blue** voiced his support for the resolution. Chairman Blue noted the CBOC's recommendation to the Developer to focus on youth aligns with Developer's ongoing efforts to focus on youth development, training, and participation while also presenting an opportunity to further them. Chairman Blue thanked the committee for its thoughtfulness, diligence, and effort. He gave kudos for how the CBOC is working together as a whole.
- vi. **Member Semaia** speaking on behalf of the Bills, their leadership, and their representatives on the committee, expressed appreciation for the collaborative efforts that brought the group to this point. He emphasized that the process was marked by meaningful dialogue, thorough research, and thoughtful reliance on the expertise of committee members.

Upon a motion by Member Whyte, seconded by Member Sumbundu, and without opposition, the CBOC passed the resolution.

- 2. **Addressing Prior Public Comments.** **Member Semaia** addressed community member Connie Irvin's comment from the previous CBOC meeting in which Ms. Irvin inquired whether the process for greater stadium-area development in Orchard Park would be inclusive of MWBE vendors or opportunities. Member Semaia responded that from the Bills' perspective, matters related to Orchard Park development (unrelated to the stadium) are solely being handled by the Town of Orchard Park and that the town does have a master plan and a website (OPstadiummasterplan.com).

**Chairman Blue closed Agenda Item No. 3.**

#### **AGENDA ITEM NO. 4            Community Benefits Updates**

As part of the Community Benefits Update, Member Semaia, in his capacity as Community Benefits Director on behalf of Developer, provided a community benefits update. Member Semaia provided a brief construction update, highlighting several key milestones. The team recently celebrated the Topping Out of the superstructure on April 4, 2025, alongside tradespeople, elected officials, and the project team. Overall, construction progress has surpassed 50%, with over 1,200 tradespeople currently on site daily, a number expected to increase to 1,500 during the summer. The precast seating bowl is now fully complete. Additionally, the first exterior precast panel was installed in March, with installation continuing through the spring and summer months.

## **BUSINESS PARTICIPATION AND WORKFORCE HOUR OBJECTIVE UPDATES**

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:***

- **Workforce Update:**

- As of February 28, 2025, Developer has exceeded its minority and apprentice workforce hours, reporting (i) 23.66% for minority work hours (which exceeds the 15% goal) and (ii) 16.22% for apprentice work hours (which exceeds the 10% goal). Developer also reported the following percentages with respect to non-minority women work hours: 3.68% for non-minority women work hours (which falls just below the 5% target).
- Currently exploring opportunities to collaborate with NYS DOL, Erie County, SUNY Erie, and GT to host an event focused on recruiting women and highlighting job opportunities available throughout the region.

Category	Goal	Through 2/28/2025
Minority Work Hours	15%	23.66%
Non-Minority Women Work Hours	5%	3.68%
Apprentice Work Hours	10%	16.22%

- **Business Participation Update:**

- As of Q4 2024, Developer has awarded a total of 324 MWBE/SDVOB contracts or OCSD-4 commitments. 193 of the awarded MWBE/SDVOB contracts or OCSD-4 commitments have been made to Regional MWBE/SDVOBs. 146 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: 324
- Regional MWBE/SDVOB Contracts or OCSD-4 Commitments: 193
- Regional MWBE/SDVOB Contracts or OCSD-4 Commitments <= \$1,00,000: 146

Regional MWBE/SDVOB Contracts or OCSD-4 Commitments	
< \$24,999	39
\$25,000 – \$49,999	12
\$50,000 – \$99,999	16
\$100,000 – \$249,999	29
\$250,000 – \$499,999	25
\$500,000 – \$1,000,000	25
<b>Total &lt;= \$1,000,000</b>	<b>146</b>

\*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



- 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).

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%
<b>MWBE &amp; SDVOB Total</b>	<b>\$554,400,000</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>38.7%</b>



○ Member Semaia provided the following list of prime contractors:

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|--|--|---|
| • PJP Installers, Inc. (MBE)                     | • <b>Ferguson Electric / E-J Electric JV</b> | • Executive Group                                     |
| • <b>Mark Cerrone, Inc.</b>                      | • <b>Ferguson Electric / E-J Electric JV</b> | • Allegheny Millwork Inc.                             |
| • <b>Ferguson Electric / E-J Electric JV</b>     | • <b>John W. Danforth Company</b>            | • <b>Tiede Zoeller (SDVOB)</b>                        |
| • <b>Ferguson Electric / E-J Electric JV</b>     | • <b>D.V. Brown &amp; Associates</b>         | • FCS Group (MBE)                                     |
| • <b>Pinto Construction Services, Inc.</b>       | • Rael Automatic Sprinkler Co., Inc.         | • <b>R.W Painting (WBE)</b>                           |
| • <b>Union Concrete &amp; Construction Corp.</b> | • George M. Raymond Co.                      | • <b>Superior Steel Door and Trim Co., Inc. (WBE)</b> |
| • Schindler Elevator Corporation                 | • William H. Lane Inc.                       | • <b>GP Flooring Solutions (WBE)</b>                  |
| • Source Blue                                    | • Irwin Seating Group                        | • <b>Heritage Contract Flooring, LLC</b>              |
| • <b>SubAir Systems</b>                          | • Island International Enterprises, LLC      | • Rommel Fence, LLC (WBE)                             |
| • Baker Concrete Construction, Inc.              | • Sightline Commercial Solutions LLC         | • <b>Billitier Electric, Inc.</b>                     |
| • Cives Steel Company                            | • Crystal Steel Fabricators, Inc. (MBE)      | • Design Communications, Ltd.                         |
| • R. W. Sidley, Inc.                             | • Crystal Steel Fabricators, Inc. (MBE)      | • <b>Scrufari Construction Co., LLC</b>               |
| • Crown Corr                                     | • <b>Thomas Johnson, Inc.</b>                | • <b>Union Concrete &amp; Construction Corp.</b>      |
| • High Concrete Group                            | • <b>SwimEx, Inc. (WBE)</b>                  |   |
| • <b>Union Concrete &amp; Construction Corp.</b> | • SCG Fields, LLC                            |   |
| • Roger & Sons Concrete, Inc. (MBE)              | • <b>Jameson Roofing</b>                     |   |
| • Celtic Sheet Metal, Inc. (WBE)                 | • MTN Inc.                                   |   |
| • Celtic Sheet Metal, Inc. (WBE)                 | • <b>Hamburg Overhead Door, Inc. (WBE)</b>   |   |
| • F. W. Sims, LLC                                | • Builders Hardware                          |   |

\*BOLD = Regional

For List of Awarded Contractors and Package Descriptions, please visit [www.buffalobillsnewstadium.com/contracting-opportunities](http://www.buffalobillsnewstadium.com/contracting-opportunities)

## POST CONSTRUCTION OPERATION

Member Semaia highlighted the Maintenance and Operations as well as Concessions goals outlined in the CBA:

- “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:
  - 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
  - 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 next provided an update regarding Developer’s ongoing meetings with Legends, along with continued planning and research (including via NYS and Erie County databases of certified firms). Additionally, Legends has posted the General Manager and Executive Chef positions, both critical roles in the planning and preparation for the 2026 opening, and is actively moving forward with the hiring process. Member Semaia commented there would be additional concessions information later in his update.

Member Semaia noted Developments by JEM hosted a second series of NYS and Erie County MWBE certification classes, offering hands-on instructional assistance for businesses interested in becoming certified. In total, 37 regional small businesses were pre-screened with 23 businesses meeting pre-qualifications to register for the program. Thus far, 5 businesses have submitted applications for certification with continuing assistance for others. The breakdown of participating businesses are: food, construction consulting, art consulting, coaching/motivational speaking, health and wellness, and financial coaching. Member Semaia clarified that the program is free of charge for businesses and that certification support is not limited to future maintenance, operations, or concessions of the stadium but rather serves as a resource for supporting any business.

In response to inquiries from CBOC and community members regarding concessions, Member Semaia provided an updated high-level timeframe for Legends’ concessions planning and implementation:



In addition to the timeline highlights, Member Semaia noted that in approximately Q4 of 2025, Community Huddles will be hosted by Legends, Developments by JEM, and the Bills to share information about upcoming opportunities and gather direct feedback from community members interested in getting involved.

### ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY BENEFITS UPDATES

To conclude his presentation, Member Semaia discussed the Bills and Developer’s various initiatives over the prior month, including:

- The Bills support of the Say YES Saturday Academy and Black Family Wellness Expo at BUILD Academy to host a HeartBEAT event in partnership with the American Heart Association, featuring hands-only CPR training



- The Bills and Highmark hosted their annual Team Smile event at Highmark Stadium, providing free dental services to 220 local elementary school students and promoting the importance of proper oral health
- The Bills hosted the High School Girls Flag Football Kickoff, featuring over 65 teams from Western New York. This is the first year Buffalo Public Schools had a team and presence.

Next, Member Semaia highlighted methods of outreach for information pertaining to the CBOC, including physical and online postings to [buffalobills.com](http://buffalobills.com) and [erie.gov](http://erie.gov), as well as distribution to papers of record such as the *Buffalo Challenger*, *The Criterion*, *Grand Island Dispatch*, *East Aurora Advertiser*, and *Lancaster Bee*. Additionally, information is shared with news media outlets like WUFO, *Buffalo News*, WIVB, WKBW, WGRZ, and Spectrum News. Further community outreach by the Bills includes flyers being placed in community centers by community engagement coordinator Developments by JEM. Meeting Notices, Meeting Minutes, Meeting Agendas, Meeting Materials, Annual Reports, and the CBOC Directory are all made available to the public.

Finally, Member Semaia introduced the Bills' new dedicated webpage for the Community Benefits Agreement, which serves as a central hub where anyone in the community can access information about the CBA. The page includes links to the CBA, the CBOC, the annual report, and details on how to submit community vulnerabilities and priorities, request donations and sponsorships, and funding from the Bills Foundation. Member Semaia reiterated that the CBA is an aggregation of various ways the Bills invest in the community. In addition to public CBOC meetings, the Annual Public Hearing, and contacting Penny Semaia directly, the website also provides a submission form for the community to share their vulnerabilities and priorities. The website is <https://www.buffalobills.com/new-stadium/community-benefits-agreement>.

#### Comments by committee members:

- **Member Sumbundu** commended the Bills on their current progress toward their goals. He acknowledged the ambitious targets of 30% and 6% related to post-construction, maintenance and operations, and construction, and asked whether, with just a year remaining, the team feels confident in their ability to meet these goals by the stadium's opening next fall.
  - In response, **Member Semaia** indicated the Bills are moving forward with their plan to ensure commercially reasonable efforts are put forth toward attaining the goals.
  - **Member Sumbundu** expressed his appreciation for the response. He added that while a lot of focus has been placed on construction, it's important to ensure the same effort is put in place toward meeting the post-construction goals.
- **Member Weyant** asked whether the Bills are approaching post-construction with a long-term vision and commitment, rather than viewing them as short-term initiatives.
  - **Member Semaia** responded that the Bills' community benefits commitment is a 33-year agreement, making it clear that this is a long-term effort.
- **Member Whyte** commented that Member Semaia had referenced there have been lessons learned from the construction phase of the project and asked if he could provide or reflect on some of them?
  - In response, **Member Semaia** shared that there is a significant effort underway to identify businesses with certifications across New York State and Erie County. He noted that the team has been proactive in hosting MWBE certification sessions, with more than 50 businesses currently in the process of obtaining certification. He also emphasized the



importance of two-way communication with the community, highlighting Community Huddle sessions that were held throughout construction and will be held with Legends throughout the County as a way for residents to learn about opportunities and share feedback. Additionally, he acknowledged the community's strong desire for updates, but stressed the importance of sharing accurate and timely information. The team is being intentional about providing updates only when they are clear and reliable, to avoid creating false expectations or spreading misinformation.

- **Chairman Blue** noted that transportation has long been a barrier for the community. He acknowledged efforts by the Bills and NFTA to support access on gamedays, but with ambitious goals to engage the community in contracts and opportunities, he asked whether there are ongoing discussions to address Buffalo's broader transportation challenges.
  - In response, **Member Semaia** stated that the Bills recognize the importance of transportation and noted that the Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) includes the development of a transportation hub. He shared that there have been ongoing meetings and collaboration with NFTA. He also mentioned that the CBA requires a public hearing, which is being targeted for late spring or summer of 2025, to gather additional input. The focus remains on the hub and available transportation lines.
- **Member Whyte** expressed her appreciation for the increased clarity around concessions, noting that the presentation contained significantly more information than the CBOC has received to date. She inquired about the timeline, specifically, at what point Legends expects to confirm contracts with vendors in order to meet the 36% procurement goal. She also asked Member Semaia for clarification on certification, questioning whether obtaining certification necessarily means businesses will be directly linked to or guaranteed a contract by Legends, implying it was important to clarify for the community. She also inquired about the timeline for opportunities deadlines and when such information would be forthcoming.
  - **Member Semaia** responded that he is not prepared to provide a timeline for contracts at this moment, but confirmed that obtaining a certification through the certification workshops held by Developments by JEM does not guarantee a contract. He agreed with Member Whyte's remarks, stating that certification provides additional potential for businesses to be contracted and qualify toward MWBE goals. He also emphasized that the mission behind certifying small regional businesses is part of a holistic approach, further allowing businesses to take full advantage of opportunities in the region at large, as the CBA also supports small businesses overall. Lastly, Member Semaia confirmed additional information would be forthcoming when available.
- **Member Sumbundu** commented that he had the opportunity to attend the Team Smile event, calling it a fantastic occasion with many children from across the region. He praised the event for the great work done in providing access to dental care for families and children who might otherwise not have the time or resources for such services. He also asked about the 6-month advance CBOC calendar request from previous CBOC meetings, noting it is intended for public awareness.
  - **Member Semaia** responded that the Developer is working with the County on identifying locations. Member Semaia also noted that he is waiting for a few CBOC members to submit their availability for future CBOC dates.

- **Member Whyte** expressed appreciation for the launch of the website and asked if it is linked to the Buffalo Bills Foundation website. She also inquired if the new website links to live versions of the CBA itself. While she acknowledged the improvements, she continued to strongly advocate for a public-facing portal that would allow the public to directly apply for resources. She mentioned she would explore potential future recommendations for this. Member Whyte also asked if, now that the 2024-2025 fiscal year has officially closed, the annual report could be expected around July. She suggested that the CBA annual report should include clarifications, such as distinguishing between in-kind and cash contributions, specifying the amount contributed by the Bills Foundation versus the CBA itself, and making these distinctions clear to the public. Additionally, she recommended considering how to standardize reporting from one year to the next to ensure consistency.
  - **Member Semaia** confirmed that the website includes links to the Bills Foundation, as well as to donation and sponsorship request forms. He also confirmed that the website links directly to the CBA. In response, Member Semaia clarified that on the new CBA website, community members can request resources through the Bills Foundation, as well as submit a Request for Donation form. Regarding the annual report, Member Semaia confirmed that it is due 120 days from the close of the fiscal year, which will be July 29, 2025. He acknowledged the feedback for the next annual report.

***Chairman Blue closed Agenda Item No. 4.***

#### **AGENDA ITEM NO. 5            New Business**

No new business was brought forth by CBOC members.

***Chairman Blue closed Agenda Item No. 5.***

#### **AGENDA ITEM NO. 6            Public Comment**

Chairman Blue opened the meeting for public comment, which is limited to three (3) minutes per commenter.

- **Michael Bogucki, Venue Strategies** – Mr. Bogucki indicated that regarding the transportation question, Venue Strategies is on LaBella Associates and Orchard Park’s planning study team and wanted to let it be known that transportation and a transportation hub is included as a part of the analysis that LaBella is performing.

***Chairman Blue closed Agenda Item No. 6.***

#### **AGENDA ITEM NO. 7            Adjournment**

Chairman Blue adjourned the meeting at 11:45 AM ET, upon a motion by Member Semaia.

The next CBOC meeting is scheduled for May 12, 2025.