

## MINUTES

### NEW HIGHMARK STADIUM COMMUNITY BENEFITS OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

June 16, 2026

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BestSelf Behavioral Health  
899 Main Street, Buffalo, NY 14203  
Tuesday, June 16, 2026

The CBOC convened for its 25<sup>th</sup> meeting on Tuesday, June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2026, at BestSelf Behavioral Health in Buffalo, NY. The meeting was conducted in person and public notice was posted in accordance with NY Open Meetings Law.

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

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Blue at 6:14 PM ET.

Chairman Blue noted the meeting was the fourth evening meeting of the CBOC. He established that a quorum was present.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**      Chairman Mark Blue, Todd Starowitz, Penny Semaia, Mo Sumbundu, Erich Weyant and Toni Cannady – 6

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**      Franchelle Parker, Maria Whyte, Rhonda Frederick – 3

*Chairman Blue closed Agenda Item No. 1.*

#### **AGENDA ITEM NO. 2**      Approval of Meeting Minutes from May 18, 2026, CBOC Meeting (Action Item)

Chairman Blue requested a motion to accept the meeting minutes from the committee's meeting minutes on May 18, 2026. Upon a motion by Member Sumbundu, seconded by Member Semaia, 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.

- Member Semaia, following up from the previous meeting, provided responses to community member Connie Irvin's public comments.
  - Regarding Ms. Irvin's question regarding the transportation process, Member Semaia shared that operations will remain consistent with prior Highmark Stadium best practices. This includes a continuous shuttle service operating to and from the Hamburg Fairgrounds, as well as the NFTA's Gameday Express service before and after events. Additionally, Member Semaia noted the new transportation hub, which included a public hearing process, reiterating that it will feature 10 NFTA shuttle stops, a covered area, and a

crosswalk directly across from Highmark Stadium. Additional transportation updates will be communicated clearly and consistently to both the community and workers.

- Next, Member Semaia responded to Ms. Irvin's second comment concerning wages. Regarding an individual's reported account that wages being offered by Legends Global were below New York State standards, coordination with Legends Global confirmed that this is not the case and that wages for positions offered are at or above applicable standards. Finally, Member Semaia shared that Ms. Irvin was introduced to and connected with Legends Global Highmark Stadium General Manager Mike Reilly at the most recent Merriweather Library meeting.
- Member Sumbundu commended Legends Global for hosting a stadium hiring event. He emphasized he believes it is important for Legends Global to attend CBOC meetings as they provide a direct opportunity to share hiring and workforce opportunities with the public. He also noted that not all community members are able to travel to Orchard Park and referenced prior comments on the importance of accessibility. Member Sumbundu then commented on the notice of the hiring event, stating that he was not aware of it and would not have known about the event without Member Semaia's advance notice. Lastly, he inquired whether the available positions were temporary or offered pathways to permanent employment.
  - Member Semaia responded that communication regarding the hiring fair was shared across Highmark Stadium and Buffalo Bills social media channels, as well as with the CBOC, noting the event was included in the project timeline consistently shared at prior meetings. He also noted this was the second hiring fair by Legends Global.
  - Member Starowitz added that multiple television stations promoted the job fair, with local affiliates broadcasting on-site coverage, noting overall widespread publicity.
  - Finally, Member Semaia assured the committee he would bring the request regarding future CBOC meeting participation back to Legends Global.
- Member Sumbundu recalled his previous point regarding public access to the stadium. With opening day approaching, he suggested scheduling a dedicated day for the general public to visit and view the facility. He noted that events like the Return of Blue and Red scrimmage would likely limit access to ticket holders, expressing concern for residents unable to afford tickets. He emphasized the importance of allowing everyday residents to experience the stadium rather than limiting access primarily to season ticket members.
  - Chairman Blue expressed agreement with Member Sumbundu's comments regarding broader public access to the stadium, noting community concerns regarding ticket pricing.
  - Member Semaia responded to community comments, emphasizing that for over 50 years the Buffalo Bills organization has had the community at heart, a commitment that will continue during its transition to a new home. Guided by its core values, the organization is listening to feedback and is continually exploring new opportunities going forward.
- Chairman Blue referenced discussions regarding Legends Global hiring and emphasized the importance of creating opportunities for MWBE contractors, including training and capacity-building support for local vendors. He noted that while some organizations own restaurants, they will not have the ability to execute a full menu at the stadium. Stating that Legends Global has relevant experience, he asked what training or resources could be provided to help local vendors successfully scale operations. He emphasized the importance of ensuring businesses are positioned for success and long-term economic development, rather than being placed in situations where they may struggle or fail.
  - Member Semaia responded that updates regarding the CBA and Legends Global will be shared during his forthcoming Community Benefits Updates.

- Member Sumbundu emphasized the importance of tracking how the Bills allocate and spend CBA funding throughout the year, rather than relying solely on the annual report. While appreciating the Bills' commitment and strong community support, he reiterated the need for transparency and the committee's ability to understand and influence where funding is directed.
  - Member Semaia responded that prior presentations have included entire sections on community investment, which extends beyond financial figures. He noted the organization has invested over \$7 million, which is above and beyond its commitment, and that feedback from CBOC meetings is carried forward. He stated that the annual report outlines investment allocation and performance metrics and concluded by thanking the committee for its continued engagement and participation.

**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 reported that stadium construction continues to progress and reached the June 1 Temporary Certificate of Occupancy milestone on schedule, with the project now beginning to transition into game readiness. He also reported that Governor Hochul announced that the Bills Highmark Stadium construction has surpassed its MWBE participation goal, with nearly half a billion dollars disbursed to certified MWBEs. He noted that this work will continue, and that the project is also progressing toward its SDVOB participation goal.

Next, Member Semaia shared a high-level timeframe for Legends' concessions planning and implementation:



Member Semaia noted that activities are trending in line with the planned schedule. He reported that Legends Global is in communications with potential vendors, with approximately 41% of planned stadium vendors being MWBE-certified or in the process of becoming certified. He acknowledged Geraldine Ford with Developments by JEM and the Buffalo State Small Business Development Center for their support of regional MWBEs. Agreeing with Chairman Blue's earlier remarks on the topic, he noted that some businesses are not yet at the necessary stage to operate in the stadium. For those not yet ready, Legends Global operates an incubator program, which has grown from 9 to 17 participants, providing concessions management, facilities oversight, global resources, and ongoing capacity-building support. Additionally, regional sourcing is on track, with 60% of planned food vendors located within a 100-mile radius and 72% of food products sourced within New York State to align with CBA preferences. Finally, Member Semaia highlighted Legends Global's second hiring fair.

**Comments by committee members:**

- **Member Sumbundu** asked whether there would be specific areas dedicated to New York State food products.
  - **Member Semaia** responded that approximately 72% of offerings are sourced across the stadium, and he would confirm whether specific dedicated areas are planned.
- **Member Sumbundu** asked about the timing of when RFPs will be.
  - **Member Semaia** shared that the RFP window has already passed and that Legends Global, as previously reported, has reached out to all certified firms in the food space.
  - **Member Sumbundu** expressed concern that businesses were encouraged to get State and County certified and that if they don't get contracts at the stadium as a result, the exercise to get certified was for no reason.
  - **Member Semaia** responded that certification efforts are not without value, noting that the process was opened broadly to support small businesses across various trades, including those not currently positioned to operate in the stadium. He explained that the goal is to help businesses become certified and prepared for broader opportunities beyond just the stadium, including through capacity-building programs and information sessions. He added that some businesses have been in the process for an extended period and are being supported through available resources. Ultimately, building these businesses supports broader economic development in WNY.

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

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 5**          New Business

- Member Sumbundu noted the idea of visiting different organizations and made a motion to skip the regularly scheduled July meeting and host the August meeting at Community Missions in Niagara, which was seconded by Member Weyant.
  - Member Cannady asked whether "Niagara" referred to Niagara County, noting that the CBA is designed for Erie County, and referenced prior comments, including Member Whyte's remarks on the importance of accessibility for Erie County residents, while questioning the rationale for holding meetings outside the county due to potential travel concerns. Member Cannady clarified she would defer to the overall committee on a decision but reiterated concerns about holding meetings outside Erie County due to accessibility.

- Member Sumbundu responded that members attending from Niagara had inquired about hosting.
- Member Semaia noted that the agreement reached by the CBOC in February 2024 specifies meeting locations are to rotate throughout Erie County, suggesting Member Sumbundu's proposal be discussed further in a smaller setting since the agreement, while it has elements that support Western New York, is Erie County-specific.
- Chairman Blue noted that Niagara County is within a 100-mile radius but agreed that further discussion may be needed. He then clarified that two motions were on the floor, one to suspend the July meeting and another to move the August meeting to Niagara County, after which Member Sumbundu withdrew his motion.
- Chairman Blue stated that the CBOC would not meet in July due to scheduling conflicts of several committee members.
- Member Sumbundu made a motion to forego the July meeting and establish a small working group with one representative from each represented constituency to recommend the August 17 meeting location by July 15, which was seconded by Chairman Blue and Member Semaia and passed with no opposition.
- Member Sumbundu requested attendance figures from the job fairs and estimated hiring outcomes for the next meeting, which Member Semaia stated he would obtain from Legends Global, and Chairman Blue added that any additional training sessions or events hosted by Legends Global should be shared with the CBOC.

***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.

- **Major Annette Lock, Salvation Army** – Major Lock shared that many families in WNY are working hard but still struggling to make ends meet, with increasing levels of homelessness and housing instability. She noted that homelessness has risen approximately 24% over the past year, with over 2,200 individuals affected, including nearly 700 children without a permanent home. She emphasized that while the need is significant, she believes it is not insurmountable with continued investment in solutions. She emphasized the importance of the Bills' leadership and noted that their impact extends beyond the football field into the broader Western New York community. Major Lock highlighted the growing need for emergency shelter and supportive housing and referenced the Salvation Army's Hope on Main initiative, which includes a modern emergency shelter, affordable and supportive housing, and a community center in East Buffalo aimed at creating long-term stability and pathways forward. She concluded by expressing appreciation for the Bills' and CBOC's continued leadership and commitment to the region and thanked the committee for the opportunity to share.

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

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

Chairman Blue adjourned the meeting at 6:58 PM ET.