

Illegal Tobacco Task Force Minutes

Meeting Date: June 6, 2018

Meeting Time: 10:30am

Meeting Location: 100 Cambridge Street, 2nd Floor, Conference Room D

Board Members Present: Kajal Chattopadhyay (Co-Chair), Steve Fennessy (Co-Chair), Michael Sweeney, Patricia Henley, Amber Villa, Thomas Bocian, David Solet

Others: Robert Rondeau, Brenda McConville, Julie Flynn, Alberto De La Serna, Virginia Kain, Maggie Cohen, Scott Delaney, Peter French, Josh Brabazon, Lisa Dell'Anno.

Call to Order:

- Mr. Chattopadhyay called the meeting to order at 10:46am. He gave a brief overview of the previous meeting.
- Task Force members were called to review the minutes by Mr. Chattopadhyay. As there was no discussion or changes needed, Mr. Sweeney made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Ms. Villa. Minutes were approved unanimously.

Housekeeping Items:

- According to Mr. Chattopadhyay, in the FY19 budget, the Task Force has been level funded at \$600K. More funding would enable the Task Force to do more necessary hiring, but work will continue with the budget allotted.
- Each Task Force agency will soon get a new Financial ISA for their Task Force related work. Mr. Chattopadhyay opened discussion for the agencies to discuss how funding has been going.
 - **DPH:** Funding has been primarily used to build the POST RDMS software. They are in talks now with POST for funding needs going forward (maintenance, etc.).
 - **AGO:** Pieces of the funds could be used to help with MSA compliance.
- House Ways & Means has the Task Force's proposed legislative changes (H4065). Mr. Chattopadhyay says he is hopeful it will get some traction and attention before the end of the legislative session.
- The Task Force webpage is undergoing a facelift, says Mr. Chattopadhyay. He is currently working out details to make the webpage more interactive and user-friendly so that users can more easily access relevant content.
- Mr. Chattopadhyay also presented the news of a recent indictment in a Task Force investigation. Tariq Mehmood was indicted on charges for smuggling illegal tobacco products into MA from Pennsylvania, and is alleged to have defrauded the Commonwealth in the amount of \$13M.
- One member update was given: Task Force member David Solet has returned from JAG training with the U.S. Army.

FDA Follow-Up:

- Mr. Chattopadhyay says he had a follow up phone call with the FDA based on their response to the Task Force's submitted questions.
- During the discussion, Mr. Chattopadhyay gave them background on what the Task Force is essentially trying to do – with respect to labeling other tobacco products (OTP), and if the FDA would give definitive answers that would help the Task Force establish a plan.
- According to the FDA, they do not have a pre-approval process for this type of program (OTP stamping) and would give general guidance on a case-by-case basis.
- Asked whether or not they would be willing to review a sample of stamped OTP tins in a sealed plastic bag, Mr. Chattopadhyay said the FDA indicated that they would be willing to do so.
- Mr. Chattopadhyay opened the floor to discussion on next steps with the FDA and OTP stamping.
- After further discussion on other states' initiatives with OTP stamping, SICPA states that Alabama does hand-stamping, and Mr. Chattopadhyay says Minnesota is considering a proposal to stamp OTP.
- DPH and the State Police support the proposal to present the FDA with a stamped product for them to review for the Task Force.
- Mr. Finkel of SICPA states he will work on securing a stamped sample.
- Mr. Fennessey asks if the Task Force could also submit a video demo of the process so they could review that as well and solicit their opinion.

Other Business:

- Mr. Chattopadhyay announced that the Task Force would not meet over the summer months and will reconvene in the Fall. Task Force members agreed to meet on Sept. 26, 2018 at 10:30am.
- Meeting was adjourned at 11:24am by Mr. Chattopadhyay.