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City of Northampton Selects Marketing Plan Consultant

Today Mayor David J. Narkewicz announced a contract has been signed with [Rhyme Digital](#) of Easthampton, MA to prepare a marketing plan to attract MGM Springfield casino visitors to Northampton. The funding for this \$15,000 contract is part of a \$100,000 grant awarded from the Massachusetts Gaming Commission's Community Mitigation Fund on September 28, 2017.

"I am excited that Rhyme will be working with us to create a plan for marketing Northampton's tremendous retail, dining, entertainment and arts and cultural offerings" stated Mayor Narkewicz. Blair Winans, President of Rhyme stated, "As someone who was born and raised in Western Massachusetts, I've always known Northampton as a social, cultural and economic hub for our region. Developing a marketing plan which brings that vision to life with data and analytics is something near and dear to me."

The selection of Rhyme was a result of interviews conducted in April by the Mayor's Casino Mitigation Advisory Committee; a 6-member committee formed by Mayor Narkewicz to advise him on utilizing the Gaming Commission grant funds. The committee includes: Suzanne Beck, Executive Director of the Greater Northampton Chamber of Commerce and Hampshire Regional Tourism Council, John Bidwell, Executive Director of Hampshire County United Way, Tara Brewster, Vice President of Business Development with Greenfield Savings Bank, Alan Wolf, Co-Chair of the Downtown Northampton Association (DNA) Board of Directors, Janet Warren, Director of Sales & Marketing with Fazzi Associates and Sara Gibbons, Director of Sales and Marketing, UMass/Amherst College of Humanities and Fine Arts and a member of the Northampton Arts Council.

Suzanne Beck commented, "Rhyme has a great understanding of Northampton along with strong creative and technical skills that can be matched to produce the right marketing strategy. We also look forward to leveraging Rhyme's digital destination abilities with our current promotional efforts for Northampton." Mayor Narkewicz commented, "I want to thank the committee for volunteering their time and marketing expertise in interviewing several firms and ultimately selecting Rhyme. We all look forward to working with Rhyme on a dynamic plan for ensuring that Northampton is effectively marketed to regional casino visitors."

Rhyme's work program will follow a 14 week schedule starting in May 2018, ending in early August 2018 which will include 3 phases beginning with data collection, analysis and community focus groups meetings. The next phase will be to identify plan recommendations with a final report possessing the research data collected along with a strategy and recommendations.

Once the marketing plan is completed, the remaining funds from the Community Mitigation Fund grant will be allocated toward initial implementation of the plan as per the city's application to the Massachusetts Gaming Commission.