



**For Immediate Release**

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## **Focus Springfield on the Move; City Seeking Mitigation Funds**

**Springfield**—Focus Springfield Community Television is in search of a new home for its 6,500-square-foot studio and video production facility, which is moving from 1200 Main Street to help make room for MGM Springfield.

The community television operation was informed by MGM Springfield, owner of the property at the corner of State and Main streets, that it would need to vacate the building by November, when the property will be integrated into the MGM Springfield resort.

The City of Springfield is pursuing funding from the Mitigation Fund operated by the Massachusetts Gaming Commission (MGC) to help the community television organization move to a new location in the city. MGM Springfield is also providing \$300,000 in direct funding to Focus Springfield to help cover the move. Current estimates to reestablish the facility in a new location run about \$900,000.

“The MGM project is vitally important to the future of Springfield,” noted John Abbott, Executive Director of Focus Springfield. “An investment of \$950 million by an international brand will bring thousands of jobs and out-of-town visitors to the city, and while we are disappointed to leave our studio only three years after opening, we understand the reasons for our move.

“When we located the studio in a prominent, but long-vacant, storefront, one goal was to ‘light up’ the corner of State and Main, in the hopes of stimulating development in the area,” Abbott noted.

Prior to MGM, the studio was the only major development in the neighborhood following the tornado of 2011.

“With support from the MGC, the city, MGM and the community, we expect to continue providing the same services we provide today,” Abbott said.

Mayor Domenic J. Sarno states, “The consideration and follow through of Focus Springfield in carrying out its important community roles is deeply appreciated. Focus Springfield allows Springfield residents to have the capability to have quality public community and civic programming. Also, it’s important that we’ve named our studio facility after downtown visionary and original cable TV negotiator, the Mayor/Attorney Ted DiMauro Communication Center.”

In a recent letter to the MGC, MGM Springfield President Michael Mathis urged the commission’s support of the city’s application for Community Mitigation Funds, in addition to the “significant relocation payment” made by MGM to help with the Focus Springfield move.

Mathis said, the “highly regarded public access cable television studio is an appropriate and worthy use of such funds.”

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**Focus Springfield**

The local community television hub hosts leading-edge technology that allows local producers and Springfield residents interested in learning the skills needed to produce and air video programming on Springfield cable Channels 12, 15, and 17. Programming spans a range of subjects, including music by local artists, youth sports, government meetings, local history, entrepreneurship and economic development, to name a few.

Since opening in 2014, Focus Springfield has trained and assisted 87 individuals in the production of videos, and hosted 39 interns from nine colleges and universities. The facility houses a 2,500-square-foot performing arts studio for TV production, live performances and public meeting space, a six-station editing lab, a ‘green screen’ studio, a smaller meeting room and offices.

“We have made great strides in our mission to teach local producers how to use video to tell their stories about their city,” noted Executive Producer Stephen Cary. “Springfield is home to a diversity of creative folks of all ages. Due to recent efforts by the city, we are seeing an influx of younger, ‘high tech’ workers moving in to take advantage of the many assets the city offers,” said Cary.

Cary got his start in video as an intern for Continental Cablevision in the late 1980s. “I love what I do, and our studio has allowed us to teach and coach young people how they can use video to enrich their lives while developing skills and concepts that could lead to a lucrative career.

“Video is my first passion, but teaching is a close second,” said Cary, who has taught at Holyoke High School and Renaissance School in Springfield. “It is a pleasure and a privilege to work with the interns here, as well as the many community producers that come through our doors,” noted Cary.

Prior to opening the studio, Focus Springfield and its predecessor agency, Springfield Media and Telecommunications Group (SMTG), installed approximately eight miles of fiber optic cables that transmit data and voice signals between municipal buildings. This fiber network also supports the Springfield Police Department’s ShotSpotter gunshot detection system, a video camera network used by police and Springfield Public Works, and a radio transmission tower providing communications for local and regional law enforcement, fire, public transportation and ambulance services.

Focus Springfield evolved from SMTG, which was the successor of the Springfield Cable Endowment. The Endowment was formed as a requirement of Springfield’s first cable television contract with the former Continental Cablevision. Funds contributed to the endowment from the cable television contract were used for community programming, communications technology upgrades in the city and related investments. Funding for both SMTG and Focus is provided by the Cable TV license issued by the city to Comcast.

The MGC established the mitigation fund to offset impacts resulting from the development of any of the Commonwealth’s gaming facilities, including MGM Springfield. The mitigation fund has been the source for monies provided to local cities and towns to offset traffic and other issues related to the casino resort. Last year, the Caring Health Center on Main Street received a grant to provide valet parking to offset the lack of on-street parking as a result of the MGM Springfield construction.

MGM acquired the property in 2015 from C&W Realty. Focus Springfield leased the property in mid-2012 and began construction later that year. The building has historical importance, having been built for MassMutual in the early 1900s.

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