

State oversight of Atlantic City to continue, according to report

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ATLANTIC CITY — The resort will continue to be under state oversight, according to a report from state Special Council Jim Johnson.

"The current State oversight should last until the expiration of the State's authority in the City under the Municipal Stabilization and Recovery Act, unless at some point before that 1) municipal capacity is on strong footing and 2) Atlantic City's reliance on state aid has been substantially reduced or eliminated," according to the report.

The report also includes the several recommendations to move the city forward. Those recommendations include:

- Focus on the fundamentals of local government by building the capacity and talent of municipal employees through training and better technology to deliver essential services, respond to constituent concerns, collect more revenue, and plan for development and growth.
- Build a diverse economy by supporting the stability of the gaming industry, developing jobs with the potential for growth and higher wages, supporting the health of small businesses, and creating career ladders within the casino industry.
- Improve amenities that affect residents' quality of life and can attract new residents by developing strategic projects such as a food market, after school and summer programs for children, and walkable neighborhoods.
- Enhance the city's strengths by utilizing the network of neighborhood civic associations, arts organizations and cultural institutions, introducing non-partisan community engagement tools, and building a community collaboration database.
- Address social challenges and create pathways to opportunity by providing support for households facing foreclosure, rehabbing vacant and abandoned homes and selling them to working families at affordable prices, tackling such public health issues as infant mortality and obesity, identifying state grant programs to support the city's youth, and developing training programs to prepare unemployed city residents for work, among other activities.

"As the mayor of this great city, I have waited patiently for this day. The citizens of Atlantic City deserve to have their local elected officials control their destiny. I am very optimistic that this is a huge step in the right direction for Atlantic City and its future," said Atlantic City Mayor Frank Gilliam.

The state takeover was launched in 2016 under Gov. Chris Christie, who, along with the State Legislature, determined that Atlantic City was unable or unwilling to make tough decisions to get its finances and its half-billion dollars in debt in order. State overseers terminated union contracts and reduced pay for police and firefighters, among other austerity measures. According to the legislation, the state takeover will last five years.