

## Everett in talks with Hard Rock for casino

By **Dave Wedge** | Thursday, November 8, 2012 | <http://www.bostonherald.com> | **Local Coverage**

A blighted plot of industrial land just off the Mystic River in Everett could become a gleaming waterfront casino as an international gaming giant has begun talks with the city that could yield a new, deep-pocketed player to challenge Suffolk Downs, officials told the Herald.

Everett Mayor Carlo DeMaria said he has had preliminary talks with representatives of Hard Rock International, as well as Chicago casino titans Rush Street Gaming, about a 40-acre waterfront site bordered by Route 99 and the Mystic River that formerly housed Monsanto Chemical Co. Hard Rock officials have met with the site owner, listed as FBT Everett realty, and spoken to the city about a possible casino resort, including a glass tower and new marina, the mayor said. "I'm excited to see what plans they put forward," DeMaria said.

Formal plans have not been made and Hard Rock — which abandoned plans to build a casino in Springfield — has not met with the Massachusetts Gaming Commission to discuss the application process.

But DeMaria said Hard Rock officials are "serious" about the site, which includes a deep water port, direct access to Boston Harbor and close access to Interstate 93. Talks have included the possibility of a new ramp off I-93, as well as a new commuter rail station and water taxi service, DeMaria said.

"The site is a hidden gem," he said. "Something good is going to happen there. I'm anxious to look at the proposal."

DeMaria said he also had talks with Rush Street Gaming several months ago but has not heard any more from the company, which is reportedly eyeing several Massachusetts sites. Rush Street officials formed a local arm called Massachusetts Gaming and Entertainment LLC. The company, headed by casino titan Neil Bluhm, is among several firms that met with state gaming officials in the past week.

MGC spokeswoman Elaine Driscoll said Hard Rock hasn't contacted the board, adding, "We'd welcome any new developers that may come forward."

The Herald reported last week that two Springfield developers were furious that MGC Chairman Stephen Crosby, seeking competition in Boston, urged Hard Rock to consider the Boston area, where Suffolk Downs is seen as the odds-on favorite to land a casino license. Hard Rock and Rush Street officials did not respond to requests for comment, but both companies are reportedly interested in a Bay State casino deal.

DeMaria was confident Everett voters would back a casino, if the deal includes guaranteed jobs for residents and ample tax revenue for the city. "I think the people of Everett would probably say yes," he said. "Why not us?"

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