

## Casino Site Committee Minutes 10/15/12

Present: Theresa Plasse, Dr. Rennix, Dr. Markey, Vice Chair Pepin, Council President Ferrera, Committee Chair Paula Meara, Councilor Buddy Williams, Councilor Tim Allen, Councilor Zaida Luna, Councilor Clodo Concepcion, Maurice Thomas

Called to Order at 5:15 pm

Public Speak Out announced, no participants.

Approval of Minutes July 16, 2012.

The Chair recognized Dr. Markey and Councilors Allen, Concepcion, Williams & Luna for attending the meeting in Sixteen Acres (Chair also attended) and Councilors Williams & Allen for attending the second neighborhood meeting at the Gentile Apts.

Update given by Councilor Williams, Chairman of the Planning and Economic Development Committee on the progress of the Committee's public meetings regarding city wide vs. ward vote for the casino referendum question:

In Sixteen Acres the meeting was well attended, with over 40 people in attendance. 38 were in favor of a citywide vote. The meetings are necessary, traffic and other issues prevent people from coming downtown. This gives a pulse of what people are looking for. A lot of areas of subject matter came up. People said it was their first opportunity to come to a meeting. There is a lot of work to do in terms of educating the citizens, the voters of this city. Dr. Markey addressed the audience about the psychology. The City Solicitor was there and taking notes. Citizens have a lot of questions. Other than Public Safety & traffic, a lot of areas came up we had not talked about, i.e., one lady brought up OUI cases. She said there was a spike in OUI arrests in the area of the CT casinos.

People are really interested. He hopes as we go to other neighborhoods (Wed at E. Forest Park; Harris school, next week, also the Raymond Sullivan Safety complex, a potential site of one of the casinos.

Last Wed we had the second meeting, not as well attended as first meeting. Ten individuals were in favor of a citywide vote, one against. He plans to return to the South End for another meeting, as when he attended the Taste of Italy on Saturday, many residents were eager for information. This is critical as the South End is a host neighborhood. (Councilor Luna's neighborhood includes both the north & south ends.) Councilor Williams stated the three host neighborhoods should be able to vet any host agreements before they are approved. He stated the residents want transparency, they want meetings, and they want information. The focus is on business. The residents were not invited to the meeting the night before the debate. There should be a consideration for the host neighborhood. They tried to frame it right, but it's difficult. Residents are going to have to live with this casino 24 hrs a day; they WANT TO BE AT

THE TABLE. Councilor Williams spoke with Leo Florian about getting the neighborhood councils together from the potential host neighborhoods.

Councilor Williams thanks our attorney for his assistance at the neighborhood meetings.

He also mentioned he hasn't seen the consultant in 60 days. What if the matter comes to the City Council and there's issues? the consultant said I hope when we got to that point everything is worked out. To be worked out there has to be some communication.

They're looking for a vote by June. This is not a good process. He doesn't want the cons to come in in 30 days and say you've got to vote. In fact, he doesn't see any consultants here tonight. They said this would be an open and fair process and the nuts and bolts of this are not out.

Council President Ferrera thanks Councilor Williams for taking the committee to the neighborhoods, for getting the heartbeat and pulse of our people. We are desperately trying to reach out and include everyone in the process. He explained that when we last met Councilor Allen indicated a willingness to participate or work on a committee with other individuals that might be interested as well as serving with going through the selection. The Chair sent a letter to the Mayor, hasn't heard anything back. That was the day the proposals were due for phase one of this process.

Councilor Ferrera sent for a public records request for all of the information that was submitted with each developer's proposals so they can view it and come up with questions and comments for an open session. He received a response from Atty. Pikula that he's happy to provide that within the 10 days required by law, hoping to have it on the 17th. He indicated that the consultant would like to have a joint meeting with the committee and the city council the week of Oct 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Councilor Allen states he is glad to hear this, as he doesn't think we're active enough as a committee, doesn't think it's good enough that we wait for them. He is concerned about us doing the due diligence that we should be doing, encourages everyone on this committee to be as aggressive as possible or we'll just hear what people want us to hear. Thinks we should ratchet up and do our own analysis. He plans to bring up new business.

Councilor Allen believes Councilor Fenton talked to the consultant, asking about the scoring process, he knows that took place, the consultant is there for us to answer questions.

Councilor Williams raises a good point. It can be resolved very easily. He read in the newspaper the Mayor formed a five-member committee. He was hoping he asked the council president or his designee to serve on the committee as this would show were serious,

Draft a letter out, we should have a city councilor or his designee, if there's department heads, there should be a city councilor, this is a tremendous project, probably biggest project ever done, they're going to vet someone, select the process, I'm going to have a million questions, please send a letter. Meara agrees.

Councilor Williams remarks that here we go again, read it in the newspaper, the committee consists of dept heads. It is noted that at least one does not live in the city.

Councilor Allen gives clarification, saying the committee named was 5 people. He believes they are to review what came in last week. Chawlek, Kevin Kennedy, TJ Plante, Kathy Breck are on the committee. The submission is likely highly technical to see if companies are even qualified. The RFP on the second phase will be a larger committee and he believes the business community will be represented on that.

After the consultant was here the last time, Cezar Froelich privately said his stance was the City Council should not be on the committee, that's his stance. Apparently this is what they normally recommend.

Councilor Williams asked wouldn't it have been nice to come and say that to you.

This language in law is completely different, legislation written this way for the local government to participate in the process. We have to vote the site,

Detroit did not have City Council approval. Even if they did, that's the precedent. Here we are talking about a committee and he has no idea why and how the selection was made. This is new. They haven't seen a proposal before.

Chair Meara explains this is unprecedented legislation in that it requires the host agreement to be approved by the City Council, elected by the people, then for the process to go to a referendum.

Councilor Ferrera stated last Thursday @ 5:00 the city received its first proposals in the RFP process. There were 3 responses, 1 being Ameristar in East Springfield, MGM in the South End and Penn Gaming in the North End, somewhere by the newspaper building.

Everyone is hearing by the media that there are Internet sites that show renderings. MGM has opened an office downtown. This is developing very rapidly and it's important to take these details as things are happening rapidly. To the members of the committee that are not elected officials, you represent your community and we want to hear what people say. Feel free to bring your questions next week when we meet with the consultants. We will have documents by Wednesday and they will be available to you on the City's website. He encourages you to look at them. He thinks it's going to really put all the things we have been talking about in perspective. He encourages us to

research the three companies, go on Google, see what kind of business you think they're doing in other communities. If you think of a question write it down and bring it to a meeting. This is new, but not to the companies, they're going to have hiccups. They have success stories. If you don't have access to a computer, you can look at it on the computer at the city council office. Talk to your neighbors. Mention the citywide vs. the ward vote. Ask them to participate in those meetings.

One other thing before he opens it up to floor. Today he was with Councilor Murphy from Boston and Joe Petty from Worcester. Council President Murphy from Boston said their process is going slow. It's not going to be sped up or rushed. They want to do it correctly. There were reports last week that one company that was looking into Springfield is now considering the Boston location. Councilor Ferrera thought Boston would be looking to be quicker on this matter.

Dr. Markey asks that the record on the July minutes include Archbishop Timothy Paul's last name correctly.

Councilor Allen states he has one new thing to bring up. Our analysis could be what we hear in city hall, but also on site visits to cities that have casinos. He knows there is a business chamber committee that is making phone calls to their counterparts and city council offices could do separate analysis. No matter what we're told, there's another story, additional analysis.

Councilor Allen proposes we put together a questionnaire. We can put together contacts and split up. A few each can take one city and take the phone question.

Are we similar to one community? Should a few of us fly there and check that? He is thinking that \$10,000. in expenses is not out of our range. He realizes there is not money for anything, but there should be money for research.

Chair Meara adds her she was thinking we should talk to the neighborhood associations in these communities.

Maurice Thomas states he has been talking to people around this issue, both on the subject of citywide vs. ward vote and more.

Dr Markey questioned is it not the state gaming commission that awards the license and Chair Meara explains the process is the mayor negotiates a host agreement which must be approved first by the City Council and then by a vote.

Assistant City Solicitor Anthony Wilson explains regarding the host agreement and also states the gaming commission could accept or reject it.

Councilor Ferrera states it is a good point made by Councilor Allen. We need to know the three companies. We can easily see where they do business. We can draw our own conclusions from that. We can use that information coupled with that work. Maybe we can break down some members work on each of the companies.

Chair Meara asked that for submission by email of questions for a survey and she will collate. Anyone interested in helping, please contact her.

Vice Chair Pepin brought up that last Friday the Feds rejected the Wampanoag compact in Taunton that was destined to be one of the three casinos. Now there are two left, Boston and the western part of the state. Now that the Wampanoag deal has been killed by the Feds, there are 3 casinos back on the table and this may or may not affect the players in Springfield. There was a question regarding whether or not an applicant can only apply in any one of the zones and if nothing would preclude a company from applying in multiple zones.

Meeting adjourned.