

Springfield Casino Site Committee

June 11, 2012

Present: Paula Meara, William Pepin, Zaida Luna, Bud Williams, Timothy Rooke, Timothy Allen, James Ferrera, Maurice Thomas, Martin Loughman, Therese Plasse, Moses Gonzalez, Dr. Bobbie Rennix.

Absent: Dr. Martin Markey, Richard O'Connor, Reginald Green

Meeting started at 5:05pm

Jeff Cuiffreda- Executive Director of Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce

Mr. Cuiffreda discussed that the Chamber is now starting to study the possible impacts of a casino in Springfield now that casino gaming has been approved in the state.

He said there is no doubt casinos will have a large impact on employment. Labor is always important to the Chamber especially given the City has a 9.2% unemployment rate.

Chamber believes the State legislation (house bill 3807 now chapter 194) as written if properly carried out will address business concerns. He makes several references to items discussed in Attorney's Moore memo.

He discussed concerns about infrastructure. The Chamber doesn't want to see a casino plan that ignores the city's already existing assets.

He sees the Site committee needing to be focused on two tracks. The first track being Springfield is chosen for a casino. Second track if Springfield is not chosen then we need to work with other communities looking at Casino's (Palmer, Holyoke, etc).

He said Chamber also concerned about the impact of casinos on such things as the Mass Mutual Center, Basketball Hall of Fame, City Stage, etc. He mentioned written into the state legislation is a requirement that developers need to sign agreements with these attractions. He mentioned section 18 of the bill calls for cross marketing/ promoting of local businesses

He said that some downsides of casinos such as crime, loss of jobs, impacts on small businesses, problem gamblers are all things that need to be studied more.

Councilor Williams asked if the Chamber will be working with other chambers in the valley. He said that full thought has not been given to this as of now.

Philip Dromey- Deputy Director of Planning

He discussed that casino's would currently fall under indoor places of amusement. A casino would require at least one special permit be approved by the City Council.

Depending on location other special permits/ zone changes may be required

Special permits also may be needed for height of hotels based on which site is chosen

Mr. Dromey mentioned the City is working on a zoning modernization plan, trying to add more controls. Complex projects would have to go through a tiered review process. Clearly a casino would go through the highest tier review process.

Chair Meara asked if the Council would need to approve special permits before the public vote on a casino. Attorney Moore is unsure if this would happen before a vote. Mr. Dromey thinks the developer would want to wait till after the public vote before going for special permits.

Councilor Allen asked if the Page Blvd. site was all zoned the same. Yes all zoned business A

Councilor Allen also asked about land use issues being addressed before public vote or after public vote. Answer unclear at this time

Councilor Rooke: Thinks the City Council, Mayor and Site committee members need to sit down to make sure on the same page. He doesn't want to see the Mayor in favor of one proposal and the council in favor of something else. Etc. He mentioned we may only get one chance and we need to be united. He suggested a meeting with the Mayor.

Chair Meara asked if we should try and set up a meeting with the Mayor. Councilor Ferrera made a motion to do so. The motion was seconded by Councilor Rooke. Vote was unanimous.

New Business

Bill Pepin made a motion that we set aside time to formally invite the public to come forward with comments/ concerns. Public speak out will take place at the start of the meetings. Everyone was in favor.