



Ameristar, MGM, Penn National meet Springfield casino filing deadline

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By **Peter Goonan, The Republican**

By **PETER GOONAN and DAN RING**

SPRINGFIELD — Three companies – all known to have an interest in **building a casino in Springfield** – were the only firms that filed preliminary proposals with the city by the 5 p.m. deadline Thursday, setting up a three-way, high-stakes competition here for a casino license.

The companies that responded to the city's Request for Qualifications and Proposals were: **MGM Resorts International**, which is planning a South End casino; **Penn National Gaming**, which is planning a casino in the North End of the downtown district; and **Ameristar Casinos**, which is planning a casino at the former Westinghouse site in East Springfield.

No other companies will be allowed to compete for the Springfield casino license, said Kevin E. Kennedy, the city's chief development officer, as set under city guidelines.

A fourth company having an interest, **Hard Rock International**, dropped plans in Springfield, but stated it **still has an interest** in a Massachusetts casino.

The state will allow just one casino in Western Massachusetts. Mohegan Sun is proposing a casino

Three Casinos Meet Springfield's Filing Deadline

Kevin E. Kennedy, the city's chief development officer for the City of Springfield announces that three casinos met the Springfield filing deadline on Thursday.

Company information

MGM Resorts

Headquarters: Las Vegas, Nev.

Number of casinos in operation: 23

CEO: Jim Murren

Most recent casino project: CityCenter on the south side of the Las Vegas strip

Annual revenue: \$7.8 billion

Number of employees: 50,700

Penn National Gaming

Headquarters: Wyomissing, Pa.

CEO: Peter M. Carlino

Number of casinos in operation: 21

Most recent casino project: Hollywood Casino in St. Louis, under construction

Annual revenue: \$2.7 billion

Number of employees: 16,740

Ameristar

Headquarters: Las Vegas, Nev. 89169

CEO: Gordon R. Kanofsky

Number of casinos in operation: 8

Most recent casino project: Purchase of Creative Casinos of Louisiana

Annual revenue: Over \$1 billion

Number of employees: 7,210

in Palmer.

"We are going to dance with who came to the dance, basically," Kennedy said. "I think we have a wonderful choice before us. We have two downtown proposals and one in the eastern part of our city. I think they all have a uniqueness to them."

The state will allow up to three casinos in Massachusetts, but just one casino in Western Massachusetts. All three casino companies would compete for the right to go to the ballot in Springfield for voter approval with one or more ballot questions possible, officials said.

Mayor Domenic J. Sarno said Thursday that he was very happy that three "world class" casino operators have submitted proposals. The city ultimately will look for the casino having the greatest location and economic development benefit, he said.

The three entrants in Springfield will now be reviewed by a five-member Casino RFQ Review Committee including Kennedy. Those companies who are pre-qualified by the committee by Oct. 31, will then be invited to submit far more detailed proposals in the next phase, that starts Nov. 1.

The review committee consists of Kennedy, Public Works Director Allen R. Chwalek, Deputy City Solicitor Kathleen Breck, Board of Assessors Chairman Richard Allen, and Finance Director Timothy J. Plante.



The Republican | Dave Roback

Kevin E. Kennedy, Springfield's chief development officer, and Springfield City Solicitor Edward M. Pikula announce the filings for casino operators Thursday at Springfield City Hall.

Under Phase 1, companies submitted their qualifications, financial information and preliminary plans, along with paying a \$50,000 "submittal fee" designated for the cost of city-hired consultants. The initial submissions will be made public following an initial review in coming days, Kennedy said.

Mohegan Sun, meanwhile, is proposing a casino in Palmer, and other casino proposals are still possible in the region. The single casino for Western Massachusetts will need approval from voters in that community and approval from the Massachusetts Gaming Commission.

Penn National on Thursday **officially unveiled its plans** for an \$807 million casino resort and entertainment complex in the North End of

downtown Springfield, officially joining the high-stakes competition in Springfield.

Penn National, if it wins a state casino license, would purchase and move the Main Street offices of The Republican

to another downtown location, company officials said.

Penn National, based in Wyomissing, Pa., said the company's casino project would be on 13.4 acres and would include mixed-use development on the riverfront in Springfield.

The company said The Republican offices would be moved to a newly-renovated downtown location featuring a state-of-the-art "village square" concept.

Penn National's proposal is for a Hollywood-brand casino, including 3,000 to 3,500 slot machines, 80 to 100 live table games, 20 to 30 tables in a poker room, a hotel with 300 to 500 rooms, a spa, restaurants, a night club, 4,000 to 5,000 spaces of structured parking, and 30,000 to 45,000 square feet of meeting and convention space.

"Our proposed \$807 million destination casino resort will be the centerpiece of a revitalization of the city and bring thousands of new permanent jobs, significant union construction jobs and millions of tax dollars to the region," said Peter M. Carlino, chairman and chief executive officer of Penn National.

Penn National's partner on the project is Peter A. Picknelly, chairman and chief executive officer of Peter Pan Bus Lines, whose operations would be moved to a renovated Union Station.



Submitted rendering

A conceptual drawing shows plans for a casino proposed by Penn National on Main Street in Springfield.

Picknelly issued a statement saying he is excited about his partnership with Penn National Gaming.

"As a lifelong resident of Springfield, I take great pride in being associated with this proposal," he said. "The \$807 million project that we've unveiled today holds the potential to dramatically transform the economic future of our city. Not only will it create new jobs and additional tax revenue, it will serve as a catalyst for all sorts of additional development across the city."

Penn National, which owns and operates 28 gaming and pari-mutuel facilities in 19 jurisdictions, also plans to help in the renovation of the historic Paramount Theater and establish administrative offices in the building.

The Paramount, located at 1700 Main St., is owned by the New England Farm Workers Council, led by president Heriberto Flores, who has been in support of a downtown casino.

Troy A. Stremming, a senior vice president with Ameristar, said that an Ameristar official delivered its proposal to Springfield on Wednesday.

"We're excited, very proud of what we submitted," Stremming said.

In November of last year, Ameristar, which operates eight casino properties in other parts of the country, became the **first casino company to announce a proposal** for Springfield. In January, Ameristar closed on a deal and paid \$ 16 million to purchase a 41-acre site in Springfield on Page Boulevard and Interstate 291 for a planned gaming resort.

"Our eyes have been set on Springfield from the very first moment," said Stremming, in a possible reference to MGM, which initially chose Brimfield for a casino and then abandoned that site for its current 10-acre proposal in the South End of downtown Springfield.

Because Ameristar has more land than MGM or Penn National, Stremming said, Ameristar can build more hotel rooms, gaming and restaurant space, he said. Ameristar would therefore create more jobs and more revenues for the city and the state, Stremming said.

MGM, the largest casino operator on the Las Vegas strip, **announced plans in August** to develop an \$800 million gambling, hotel and entertainment project in Springfield.

The MGM Springfield project, if approved, would be located on about 10 acres of land that were heavily damaged by a June 2011 tornado, the Las Vegas-based company said. The plans include restaurants, movie theaters and shopping.

"Competition is great for the City of Springfield and for the bidders; it makes the process stronger," said Bill Hornbuckle, MGM's chief marketing officer and president of MGM Springfield. "We came into this knowing we wanted to set a high bar by putting together a world-class proposal to help Springfield win the Western Massachusetts license. That's what we believe we're doing and why we've made such a commitment of our time in the community."

MGM has already paid a \$400,000 application fee to the state Gaming Commission and the other two will be



[Enlarge](#)

Mark M. Murray, The Republican

Artist view from Interstate 91 looking north at the MGM Springfield in downtown .The multilevel parking garage can be seen in the foreground

MGM Unveils Casino Plan gallery (15 photos)

required to make that payment during the second phase, officials said.

George Arwady, publisher and chief executive officer of The Republican, said that the newspaper does not have an agreement yet for a new office in the downtown. Arwady said business and news employees would be located into a modern office in the heart of the downtown. The company is negotiating for an option for property in the Memorial Industrial Park off Interstate 291 for a printing facility, he said.

To help avoid the appearance of a conflict, the newspaper will write no editorials for or against any possible casino site.

Penn National has a framework of an agreement for an option to purchase properties owned by The Republican.

Penn National has submitted to the city of Springfield and the Springfield Redevelopment Authority a proposal to develop the casino resort.

The Republican, in its new location, would aim to create a 21st century "village square," Arwady said.

"If it turns out that we move our news and business offices to the heart of downtown, we are working on a tentative concept for state-of-the-art space where the public would be invited to interact directly with our media in many ways that we hope would make our new location the center of the community conversation, much as an old-fashioned village square," Arwady said in a statement.

If Penn National does not win the casino license for Western Massachusetts, The Republican would remain in its current building, he said.

State Sen. Michael R. Knapik, R-Westfield, said Thursday he is "comfortable where ever a casino is located in Western Massachusetts."

Knapik, who represents two communities, Westfield and Holyoke, where casino inquiries for location were made earlier this year, said "Springfield has been very aggressive is seeking casino proposals and as a result will have multiple proposals to evaluate."



The Republican | Greg Saulmon

A photo illustration, based on a 2010 aerial view of the site, shows the area purchased by Ameristar. Page Boulevard is at the left of the photo. The buildings at the site have since been razed.

The senator said "regardless of where the Western Massachusetts project is built, all communities in this part of the state will benefit in the terms of jobs and other economic benefits that result."

Preliminary interest in Westfield as a possible site for a casino was expressed by Penn National and Hard Rock International but no further talks or inquiries have been made, City Advancement Officer Jeffrey R. Daley said

Thursday.

Staff writer Ted LaBorde contributed to this report.

Details of parcels involved in Penn National's proposal:



In the map above, areas shaded in red show parcels owned by *The Republican*. Areas shaded in green are parcels owned by companies managed by Peter Picknelly. Areas shaded in brown are owned by other entities. Penn National's proposal comprises 13.4 acres. The parcels that include *The Republican* headquarters; Peter Pan headquarters; the Kittredge building; and two Picknelly-owned properties on the west side of I-91 add up to approximately 13.45 acres. View [Springfield's North End casino proposal: The real estate puzzle](#) in a larger map

Details of parcels involved in MGM's proposal:



The map above shows the patchwork of parcels that lie within the footprint of MGM Resort International's casino proposal, which straddles Springfield's South End and Metro Center neighborhoods. Click on a shape to see parcel size, assessed value, and ownership information. Parcel shapes are approximate, and are based on the City of Springfield's GIS viewer (<http://www2.springfieldcityhall.com/gis/viewer.htm>). |

Sources: City of Springfield; Massachusetts Secretary of State, Corporations Division | Map and research by **Greg Saulmon** / The Republican |

View **The Property Puzzle: MGM's Springfield Casino Proposal** in a larger map.

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