



Mohegan Sun officials say they will provide more details about Palmer casino project prior to town referendum



By [Suzanne McLaughlin, The Republican](#)

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PALMER - [Mohegan Sun](#) officials promised Monday night to have more details of their proposed casino project which would border Thorndike Street in time for a townwide referendum to approve the project.

"We will have a bigger, better more exciting project with more amenities," said Mitchell G. Etes, CEO of Mohegan Tribal Gaming Authority.

Etes, however, did not give more details of the project. Mohegan officials said that since [MGM Resorts International](#) and [Penn National Gaming](#) have proposed competing casino projects in Springfield, they are proposing to add nearly \$200 million in amenities to a proposed \$600 million project on 152 acres bordering Thorndike Street (Route 32) across from the Massachusetts Turnpike toll plaza.

Etes declined to give specific information about the proposed additional amenities, saying Mohegan Sun did not want to tip its hand to competitors for a sole casino gaming license to be issued by the state for Western Massachusetts.

Mohegan officials have said the proposed [Palmer project](#) would create 2,500 to 3,000 permanent jobs, 1,000 to 1,200 construction jobs and more than 2,500 indirect jobs. However, they have yet to provide details about the size of the facility, traffic plans and other project components.

About 300 Palmer residents turned out Monday night for a forum at Pathfinder Regional Vocational Technical High School which was designed to answer residents' questions and give additional information.

Few of the residents, however, got the chance to ask questions at the forum which lasted about an hour.

Etes said Mohegan Sun has proven that the rural destination casino is the best model for New England.

"We already have a data base to draw from," he said. "We have lists of loyal customers."

He said Mohegan Sun would not provide more specific information about its proposed project at this point because it does not want to tip its competitors in Springfield about its proposal.

More specific information will be provided prior to a townwide referendum question on the proposal, he said, which

could take place as early as June.

The state plans on awarding one casino gaming license for Western Massachusetts.

Mary Maloney, a 20-year Palmer resident, asked why a casino is being proposed by Mohegan Sun when gaming has been less successful in recent years in Connecticut and Atlantic City.

Etes said Mohegan Sun opened a casino five years ago in Pennsylvania which he called "pretty successful."

Etes said that if Mohegan Sun wins the license for Western Massachusetts it will succeed as it has succeeded in Pennsylvania and Connecticut.

Maloney said after the meeting that she feels that with the tornado devastation suffered by the South End of Springfield, she feels Springfield's South End would be a better location for a casino.

"We will be adding almost \$200 million to this project," Etes said. "We won't be building in a vacuum."

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