



NEWS

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Casino report: Back to lawmakers by December*Quick turnaround time needed to expand gambling*

By Kevin Spence

Lawmakers want to know how existing racinos would be affected if more gaming venues are approved in Delaware.

The state's Video and Sports Lottery Licensing Commission selected a consultant Nov. 12, to study the impact additional venues would have on three racinos the state already has.

TMG Consulting, a New Orleans-based engineering and planning firm that has produced reports for The Venetian in Las Vegas and for Baltimore-Washington International Airport, was chosen from among three firms, said commission Chairman Dennis Rochford.

The consultant is charged with providing a survey to the General Assembly, which will vote on expanding gambling in Delaware.

The survey was originally to be submitted to the General Assembly by Oct. 15. In early October, Gov. Jack Markell's administration sent out a request for proposals, noting a delay in the process. State officials now expect the report to be furnished to lawmakers before the Legislature reconvenes Tuesday, Jan. 12.

After the General Assembly receives the survey results, most expect lawmakers to consider expanded gambling among their first decisions at Legislative Hall, which demands a quick turnaround for consultants.

"It's a very, very comprehensive marketing study. That is why, in the time frame we have here, there is significant effort on the consultant's part, as well as the Department of Finance, to make sure they have the appropriate information they need," Rochford said. "We want it clearly understood so it's a useful document so the Legislature and the governor can consider this issue going into January."

Rochford said the report is a traditional marketing survey that includes the economic and demographic impact of adding additional gaming venues. "It also includes criteria for optimal locations for additional venues," he said.

Rochford said he is aware of a dozen proposals for new venues in Delaware, including four in the Wilmington area and at least three in Sussex County.

He also said racinos are being considered for New Castle and Claymont.

The survey will also include the impact of establishing new venues with or without horse racing and table games.

The consultants, who were paid \$98,250, will also study the

Proposed Sussex County racinos

In Delmar, developer James Rostocki has proposed a 130-acre gambling, retail and hotel complex on Route 13.

In Georgetown, co-principal Glenn Mandalas has proposed a 78-acre, half-mile harness-racing track and gambling venue, Georgetown Downs.

In Millsboro, co-principal Preston Schell has proposed a 377-acre, gambling, retail and entertainment complex, Del Pointe Resort & Racino.

In addition, racinos have also been proposed elsewhere in the state.

History of Delaware's sports and video lottery commission

In March, to resolve a record deficit, Gov. Jack Markell proposed allowing sports betting at as many as 10 venues in the state, in addition to the state's three existing casinos. He also proposed adding additional gambling venues in Delaware.

In May, the General Assembly passed House Substitute 1 for House Bill 100, allowing sports betting only at the state's three existing casinos. But HS 1 for HB 100 also required two studies to be furnished to lawmakers: one concerning the efficacy of adding table games in the state and another one about the feasibility of allowing new gambling venues in Delaware.

The gambling venue study was to be returned to lawmakers by Oct. 15. The study is now slated to be back to lawmakers by the end of December before the General Assembly reconvenes Tuesday, Jan. 12. The bill also created the Video and Sports Lottery Licensing Commission, which is responsible for granting licenses to



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social impacts gambling has on Delaware.

"Once the study is complete, different potential investors will decide what to do and when to do it," said Rochford.

Preston Schell, who is a principal for a proposed 377-acre gambling and entertainment complex near Millsboro, Del Pointe Resort & Racino, said, "We're very happy with that selection. TMG is extremely capable and is not conflicted like other groups," he said.

Schell said the Innovation Group, a consultant that lost the bid, had worked with some Delaware casinos in the distant past. He said some might have considered the Innovation Group biased, if it had been chosen to present a survey.

"Overall, we're extremely happy with the commission's performance. Dennis Rochford has been extremely efficient in scheduling meetings. We're very pleased with how everything's progressing," said Schell.

Calls to developers of two other proposed racinos in Georgetown and Delmar were not returned at press time.

Rochford said, "Everybody knows this is a controversial issue. I come to the table, and I believe members of the commission come to the table, with an open mind and hard data so we can make a recommendation."

Joe Rogalsky, Markell's communications director, said the governor is looking forward to the commission's recommendations.

sports and video lottery agents.

The commission is composed of appointees, including Senate president pro tempore, Senate minority leader, speaker of the House of Representatives, House minority leader, director of the Delaware Economic Development Office, secretary of finance and an appointee of the governor. Dennis Rochford chairs the commission.

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