

Del Pointe

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for the state and would bring in more than 6,000 jobs, said developer Preston Schell.

The issue with the project is that it requires the casino to be economically sustainable. Just a few months ago, it seemed as if that would not be a problem.

Gov. Jack A. Markell announced a plan that would include the addition of up to three more casinos and up to 10 sports betting- only facilities — and the entire **Del Pointe** project looked as though it would be shovel ready this month.

After pressure from the state's three existing casinos, the governor's administration and the legislature started leaning away from that proposal.

In May, legislation was passed that paved the way for sports betting and table games in the First State but did away with allowances for new casinos or other venues.

In its place, it set up a committee to look into the feasibility of new casinos — the group's findings are due back by Oct. 15. After looking like the project was delayed, or halted for good, on June 4, legislation was introduced in the House that would pave the way for the project to receive its casino. House Bill 194, introduced by House Majority Leader Rep. Peter C.

Schwartzkopf, D- Rehoboth Beach, would have allowed the site to receive a casino license and set a certain number of racing days for the track.

It was assigned to the House Gaming & Pari- mutuels Committee. A committee meeting was scheduled for Tuesday.

Although its schedule had not yet been announced, many individuals close to the **Del Pointe** project believed the legislation was going to be discussed.

Rep. Schwartzkopf said he had asked the committee chairman, Rep. John J. Viola, D- Newark, to give it a hearing and had assumed it was going to be heard on Tuesday.

" I was a little surprised to see that it had been canceled," he said. " I'm not very happy."

He said he had heard rumors that an agreement had been made between the casino executives and the administration to prohibit the creation of new venues, but that the rumors were not true.

" What I'm hearing is that it was canceled because there was an agreement, but that is simply not true," said Rep. Schwartzkopf.

Phone calls to Rep. Viola were not returned on Friday afternoon.

Opponents to **Del Pointe** have said the project would oversaturate the market and hurt both Harrington Raceway and Dover Downs, which both draw their crowds from an overlapping geographical region.

The General Assembly commissioned report, due back by Oct. 15, was supposed to look into that claim.

Rep. Schwartzkopf said even if the bill had been released from committee, he did not plan on having the legislation brought up for a vote. Instead, he hoped to have the bill positioned to be voted on quickly if the report concluded that more casinos would be beneficial to the state.

" We can't do anything until we get it out of committee," he said.

Gov. Markell has expressed a similar opinion on what action should be taken on **Del Pointe** , said his spokesman Joseph Rogalsky.

" The governor thinks there ought to be additional gaming facilities if the market supports them," said Mr. Rogalsky.

Although Rep. Schwartzkopf said the bill could still move forward if House rules are suspended, the move to cancel the committee meeting has made it more difficult for **Del Pointe** .

" By not giving this bill a hearing in committee (Rep. Viola) is standing in the way of the legislature and 6,000 jobs in the middle of a recession," he said.

That is not what some from Sussex County want to hear.

" I live in Sussex County. I work in construction," said John Brown, of Lewes, who is head of the carpenters' union in Seaford. " This is a project that would help a lot of people in Sussex County with the unemployment situation.

" For the average person, we're not involved in the day- to- day actions of the legislature. We just know that this is frustrating."

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Preston Schell



**Peter C.
Schwartzkopf**



John J. Viola

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