

Delmar's casino - a horse of a different color Delmar's casino - a horse of a different color

By Henry J. Evans Jr.

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Developers of the proposed Delmar International Raceway & Casino threw their chips on the table, upping the ante in the high-stakes game to become Sussex County's first and – at least for a while – only racino.

The Delmar casino would be unique in that it isn't tied to harness or thoroughbred horseracing, as is the case with Delaware's existing racinos.

The Delmar facility is the second racino proposal for Sussex County, following that of **Del Pointe** Resort & Casino, which is planned for Millsboro.

“ Our proposal is one that provides an opportunity to draw new people to Delaware who wouldn't typically have a reason to come to Delaware,” said James Rostocki, a principal with the development group that proposes building the casino complex on a 131- acre site directly across from the 180- acre Delaware Motorsports complex on Route 13.

Rostocki said the proposal was rolled out this week for its first major public exposure. He said the Delaware Motorsports Complex has operated in Delmar for more than 50 years.

The casino would be a mile north of the Delaware- Maryland state line, about a five- minute drive from Salisbury, Md.

Rostocki said placing the casino close to the motorsports complex would allow the two venues to work in concert, making it possible to accommodate big events.

He said the casino proposal includes a hotel, an indoor multi-use entertainment and convention facility and retail shopping.

“ We'd take advantage of Delaware's tax- free shopping and all the people the larger facility would have the ability to draw,” he said.

He said for big events, the indoor sports facility would offer an alternative to the Wicomico Civic Center Arena in Salisbury.

Rostocki said the Wicomico facility can't accommodate events that would come to the area if there were a bigger venue.

He said motorsports would continue to follow a schedule much like the existing one, and that would expand to include events not typically featured at the track.

He said the development group has not yet applied for a casino license.

Rostocki said under House Substitute 1 for House Bill 100, which has passed in the House and Senate, a nine- member committee would determine whether Delaware would benefit from adding a new slots venue – one in Sussex County.

The commission would also determine whether to add table gaming in venues. Legislation requires the study to be finished by

Oct. 15.

“ After the study is completed, everyone would have the opportunity to make application to the committee to be granted the casino license,” Rostocki said.

He said he thinks the study will conclude that a Sussex County casino venue is feasible.

“ Then we would move forward with an expanded, detailed presentation and ask to be considered for the new casino license,” Rostocki said.

He said if the Delmar casino receives the license, the facility could begin operating “ very quickly because the Town of Delmar has annexed the parcel, and it’s already zoned highway-commercial.”

Rostocki said they would then present a plan to the town, get it approved and move forward.

He said although **Del Pointe** has applied for a license to operate a harness racing track it, too, still needs a license to operate a casino.

Del Pointe is taking a two-pronged stab at the casino license – the commission selects it as the Sussex County venue or House Bill 194, which provides a casino license for **Del Pointe** alone, passes in the House and Senate and is signed by the governor.

Preston Schell, **Del Pointe** principal, said the project would generate 6,000 construction related jobs over the five- year period of the project’s build out, and 2,000 permanent jobs at the casino and racetrack. Rostocki said the Delmar casino development group had not yet determined exactly how many jobs the project would generate.

“ But it would be a considerable amount, related to operating the facility and to serving people who would be attracted to the venue,” he said.

Rostocki said the development group has talked to a few people in the Delmar community and has made a brief presentation of its proposal to town officials.

He said based on the Town of Millsboro’s and its residents’ response to **Del Pointe** ’s proposal, he thinks Delmar’s response to his group’s proposal will be similar.

“ So far, the response hasn’t been negative,” Rostocki said.



COURTESY OF DELMAR INTERNATIONAL RACEWAY & CASINO
THE CASINO SIDE OF THE Delmar International Raceway & Casino complex would contain a hotel, multiuse convention center, retail shops and restaurants. Project developers say linking the casino and motorsport complex would be a new 'racino' mix in Delaware.

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