

## NEWS

Fri, Oct 2, 2009

## State's racino study delayed

*Del Pointe project continues to move forward*

By Kevin Spence

A report on the feasibility and profitability of adding more racinos in Delaware – expected to be presented to the General Assembly by Thursday, Oct. 15 – appears to be delayed. But the principals of a proposed Millsboro racino and resort say they are forging ahead as they await the report.

Joe Rogalsky, communications director for Gov. Jack Markell, confirmed the report will not be available by Oct. 15, but instead has been pushed back.

“The RFP [request for proposal] for the consultant to help with the study of possible additional venues will be going out soon,” said Rogalsky, speaking of requests for proposals for the study.

Still, principals of Del Pointe Resort & Racino Chris and Preston Schell, and Gene Lankford, say they have spent \$1 million to finalize plans for Phase 1 of the project, which includes the relocation of Bethesda Road and architectural plans for a grandstand, paddock and 1-mile harness racing track. They're also planning a job fair and public presentation for mid-October.

“We've been getting further along with who's going to build the project. We're almost there, but it's all Sussex County based. We're just real anxious to get there and start creating jobs,” said Chris Schell.

But first, the project requires a go-ahead from the Legislature.

In May, an amendment was passed for House Substitute 1 for House Bill 100 to expand sports betting in Delaware at the state's three existing racinos. The amendment included a provision to create a nine-member committee to report back to lawmakers – originally set for Oct. 15 – about the possibility of adding more gambling venues in Delaware. The Video and Sports Lottery Study Commission was charged with researching the effects on state revenues, the revenues of existing video lottery agents, the horse racing industry, employment and the surrounding communities and businesses.

Speaking of the delay, Schell said, “In all likelihood, by early November, they will have selected a professional, objective marketing group. The study should be done in mid-December with the results to legislators by the end of the year.”

In June, Millsboro Mayor and Council approved annexation of the property on Route 113 north of Millsboro. The proposed 1-mile harness racing track – unique in Delaware – also calls for an entertainment complex. It would also feature a water park, indoor sports facility, a hotel, movie theater and retail stores for a 377-acre facility – a half-billion-dollar project Del Pointe developers say would initially employ 6,000 workers, 2,000 of them permanent employees.

Quietly, Del Pointe developers have been moving forward.

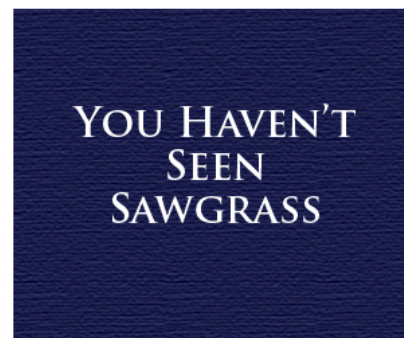
### Maryland moves forward

While Delaware's expansion of gambling venues is stalled, expanded gambling is moving ahead in Maryland.

In mid-September, a Maryland state commission approved Maryland's first slots parlor license for Ocean Downs, owned by Bill Rickman.



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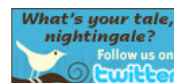



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Rickman also owns Delaware Park, a racetrack and racino in Stanton, near Wilmington. He plans to build a facility to operate 800 slot machines at the track near Ocean City – just 20 miles from the Del Pointe project.

Still, Schell keeps pressing on, saying his project is shovel-ready and would provide a boost to the Cape Region economy. "Everything's progressing to date," he said,

**Indian River opposes project**

The Indian River School Board, on Sept. 21, passed a resolution, 6-2, to oppose the Del Pointe racino. The Delaware Family Policy Council – a group that supports strong families – applauded the school board decision. "Gambling is not just a financial and budget issue; it has profound implications for marriage and families that must be considered. The Indian River school board deserves praise for bringing the best interest of its students to the center of the Del Pointe debate," said Jordan Warfel, a spokesman for the family council.

Schell called the resolution a minor hiccup.

"It's not like a school kid's going to trip and fall in a soccer field and wake up next to a slot machine," he said. The project is about 1.5 miles from nearby schools, and the Del Pointe property is separated by forestland, train tracks and a barbed wire fence, he said.

Schell said the resolution has no standing or jurisdiction over the approval process. Del Pointe has also already received preliminary state-agency approvals. Schell said the school board has no business taking a stand on the project. "It's a select group of board members motivated by political and religious beliefs to use the school board as a public venue to admonish the Del Pointe proposal," he said.

Finally, Schell said the planned security for the racino is "better than any other building in the state."

Schell said his project recently drew national attention when the 1-mile harness-racing track was featured on Sirius Satellite radio.

He said the objective is to hire as many Sussex Countians and Delawareans as possible.

"We're confident that – if a fair study is conducted ,and we think that it will be – the results will strongly support one or two gaming venues in the state, with one close to our beach resort market," Schell said.

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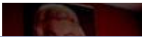
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