

NORTHAMPTON COUNTY
GAMBLING IMPACT COMMITTEE
Meeting Minutes
Monday, December 10, 2007

The scheduled meeting of the Northampton County Gambling Impact Committee was held at 6:35 PM, December 10, 2007 in the third floor Training Room.

ROLL CALL

The following committee members were present:

Robert Balum	Robert Pfenning, Chair
John Conklin	John Stoffa
Ross Marcus, Vice-chair	Phoebe Teichert
Victor Mazziotti	Ann Terres
John McGeehan	

The following media representative was present:

Dan Andrews - The Morning Call

The following municipalities were represented:

Bethlehem	Hellertown Borough
Bethlehem Township	Lower Saucon Township
Freemansburg Borough	

COMMITTEE HOUSEKEEPING

1. The minutes of the November 5, 2007 Committee meeting were approved as distributed.

2. The Committee's 2008 meeting schedule was finalized as follows:

February 11, 2008	October 13, 2008
April 14, 2008	November 10, 2008
June 9, 2008	December 8, 2008
September 8, 2008	

All meetings will take place at 6:30 PM in the third floor County Council Meeting Room.

3. The proposed Committee presentation to County Council originally scheduled for January 2008 was postponed to March 2008.

REPORT ON COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES TO DATE

The Chair reviewed the document titled "Questions Regarding Municipal Grants for Local Share Assessment Revenues" dated November 5, 2007 which summarized much of what the Committee has done since being formed in April 2007 as an advisory body for the County Executive. Two updates were mentioned. Due to the delayed opening of Sands BethWorks until the second quarter of 2009, the projected funds available for 2009 Municipal Grants was lowered to \$ 485,000. (Question 5) Also it was noted that the local grants program for the elimination of illegal slot machines has been reopened. (Question 12)

The Chair also commented on the October 8 visit of David Sanko of Bucks County with the Committee. His remarks left the Committee with the impression that the impact of the Philadelphia Park racino was manageable. He noted that weekend traffic volumes were now at the same level as Monday to Friday weekday traffic rather than decreasing. Also he noted the unexpected "exponential" growth in EMS calls.

The review of this document led to many comments from the representatives of the municipalities. They expressed surprise that the Municipal Grants were to be awarded by an independent County Authority rather than by the County itself. They were concerned that the grant process be simple and not costly to the municipalities. It is clear that the impact of Sands BethWorks will extend beyond the host city, but the extent of the impact is unknown at this time. The impact will fall heaviest on the five municipalities contiguous to Bethlehem -- hence their priority standing for the receipt of grant funds. The role of private social service agencies was briefly discussed. A need for an inventory of available services is needed, and Freemansburg has started work on this project.

SOLICITATION OF CONCERNS ABOUT THE ARRIVAL OF GAMBLING

Bethlehem Township

Traffic arriving via Route 33 and traveling on William Penn Highway and Freemansburg Avenue will increase demands on the police and rescue services.

Freemansburg Borough

Demands will be placed on the police by increased traffic on Freemansburg Avenue, especially bus traffic. Extra demands will also be placed on the Public Works department. Equipment needs of emergency services will increase, as will the number of calls.

Hellertown Borough

Route 412 traffic congestion is expected in the borough. May need state grants for crosswalks and preemptive traffic signals. There will be an increased number

of EMS calls and an increased burden on the police. An aging Public Works fleet is a problem given the increased traffic levels.

Lower Saucon Township

Roads and traffic are a primary concern. There will be an increase in the wear and tear on the roadways. The County will face a need for prison expansion due to crime. Employee costs will go up. Volunteer emergency services with recruiting problems may necessitate the hiring of paid employees to provide these services. The police will experience an increasing work load. The casino's granting of on property complementary services will lower tourism business in the township. Traffic increases from the south are expected on Route 378.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

When asked about future planning meetings of the five contiguous municipalities, the City and Sands BethWorks, the participants felt that such meetings would be desirable.

The Chair made two commitments to the contiguous municipalities. First, if all five municipalities sign on to the grant proposal presented by Lower Saucon, Hellertown and Freemansburg, the proposal would be forwarded for legal review and then on to the Authority making the Municipal Grants. Second, if this Authority should so request, the Committee will consider the grant process and the criteria for grants. A review of these discussions would take place at another meeting of the contiguous municipalities prior to the results being forwarded to the Grant Authority.

A citizen of Lower Saucon Township raised the concern about increased DUI problems and resulting accidents which might arise from the operation of the casino.

In response to a question from The Morning Call's reporter, Mr. Stoffa and Mr. Pfenning both agreed that the subject of Municipal Grants needs further consideration and discussion.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM.

NEXT MEETING REMINDER

The next Committee meeting will be Monday, February 11, 2008.