

NORTHAMPTON COUNTY
GAMBLING IMPACT COMMITTEE
Meeting Minutes
Monday, February 11, 2008

The scheduled meeting of the Northampton County Gambling Impact Committee was held at 6:30 PM, February 11, 2008 in the third floor County Council Meeting Room.

ROLL CALL

The following committee members were present:

Robert Balum	John McGeehan
John Conklin	Constance Nelson
Peg Ferraro	Robert Pfenning, Chair
Ross Marcus, Vice-chair	John Stoffa
Victor Mazziotti	Ann Terres

Note that the Committee welcomed Peg Ferraro as the new County Council Liaison.

The following media representative was present:

Carol Smith - The Bethlehem Press

The following municipalities were represented:

Bethlehem Township	Lower Saucon Township
Hellertown Borough	Slate Belt COG

APPROVAL OF DECEMBER 10 MEETING MINUTES

A draft copy of the December 10, 2007 minutes was distributed. The Chair felt revisions were necessary. The Committee agreed that a summary of the discussions would be acceptable. The draft was not approved.

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR RE: AGENDA ITEMS

Brief introductions and comments were made by the municipal representatives.

OLD BUSINESS

Municipal Grants

1. The Municipal Grant proposal made by Lower Saucon, Hellertown and Freemansburg was reviewed. Their proposal splits the Municipal Grant money into three parts:

contiguous 60% of grant funds would be split evenly among the five municipalities. No specific grant application would be required.

20% of grant funds would be available to any municipality in the County. Documentation specifying the use of the grant would be required.

application 20% of grant funds would be available to any municipality in the County except the five contiguous municipalities. No specific grant would be required.

The Committee members had no specific comments regarding this proposal. The municipal representatives expressed the opinion that the municipalities should decide how the funds are spent. The Chair repeated his commitment to forward the proposal for legal review once all five contiguous municipalities had agreed to the proposal.

2. The Committee members had no observations to make regarding the December 10 meeting. In response to the question of what grant requirements might be, the Chair offered the following possible criteria:

- A. Is the requesting municipality contiguous to the host city?
- being met B. What actual impacts of the Sands BethWorks' operation are by the proposed grant?
- millage rate C. What would be the percentage increase in the municipality's if the grant project had to be funded by the taxpayers of the municipality?
- D. How attractive and reasonable is the grant request?

3. One Committee member asked whether or not this Committee had the authority to make decisions regarding this issue. The Chair indicated that the grant awarding Authority would make all such decisions. This Committee can only make suggestions to that Authority.

Authority Making Grants

1. John Stoffa, Chair of the GPA, reported on the GPA's consideration of being the grant making Authority. The GPA has reached no decision at this point. They

hope to resolve the issue soon once the more pressing issues surrounding the Bachmann House are resolved.

2. No decision was made regarding what to do if the GPA declines the role as the grant making Authority.

3. The Committee members agreed that the Municipal Grant issue should be resolved in a timely and legal manner given that the municipalities need to know the potential for grants as they prepare their 2009 budgets. The meaning of "priority" for the five contiguous municipalities needs better definition, as does the availability of funds for the non-contiguous municipalities which may be impacted. An attempt will be made to have a legal review of the Lower Saucon et. al. proposal done before the April 14 meeting.

Committee Presentation to County Council

Since the Chair sensed that County Council feels that it has been updated, and since a new liaison has been appointed to the Committee, he recommended that the presentation to Council in March be cancelled. The Committee agreed.

NEW BUSINESS

Gambling Addiction

1. The Chair distributed a portion of a recently released report prepared by the University of Pittsburgh's School of Social Work regarding preparation within Allegheny County for the arrival of gaming. This material was used to start a Committee discussion of the impact of gambling addiction.

2. Ross Marcus gave the Committee a report of what has been done so far within Northampton County. A task force of all Human Services Divisions except for Gracedale has been formed to look at the issue. He felt the Pitt report was almost like it had been written by Northampton County. The task force supports a benchmark study prior to the casino opening as mentioned in recommendation # 7 of the Pitt report. The task force is also looking at the experience of other states with casinos. Pennsylvania has only started legalized casino gambling and thus it is too early to see new gambling addiction impacts on human services. Gambling addiction already exists in the Lehigh Valley. It will only increase with the opening of the Sands BethWorks. Gambling addiction does increase with proximity to a facility.

3. Ann Terres noted that a gambling addiction seminar will be held at First Presbyterian Church in Bethlehem on Saturday, April 26.

Pennsylvania Ethics Commission Inquiry

1. The Chair distributed a description of the Committee's duties as requested by the Pennsylvania Ethics Commission as it enforces section 1512 of Act 71.

2. A legal review will be done by the County of the impact of section 1512 as it pertains to the divestiture of direct investments in licensed operators and suppliers by County elected officials and "public officials" serving on County related committees and authorities.

Bethlehem Update

1. The Chair reported that Mayor Callahan has indicated that the Sands BethWorks will open in June 2009.

2. Ann Terres reported on a meeting she attended where Robert DeSalvio, President of Sands BethWorks, gave a presentation about the casino's development.

Other Materials

1. The Chair distributed a Pennsylvania Gambling Timeline he presented to the GPA as background information.

2. The Chair distributed a Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board flyer on the sources and used of gambling funds in Pennsylvania. Vic Mazziotti agreed to follow up on the funds available to assessors for administration of homestead exemptions under Act 1.

3. The Chair noted the availability on-line of the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board's 2007 Annual Report.

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR ON ANY GAMBLING MATTER

No comments were offered.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM.

NEXT MEETING REMINDER

The next Committee meeting will be Monday, April 14.

