

Minutes
Gaming Study Commission
Public Hearing: Tuesday, April 6, 2010, UNH Manchester Campus

Commissioners present: Joe Foster, Vice Chair; Jim Craig, David Bailey, Michelline Dufort, Bob Odell, Mary Heath and Mark MacKenzie

Staff Present: Gail Wolek; Torene Tango-Lowy assisting.

Commission Vice Chair Joe Foster called the hearing to order at 6:05 p.m.

Vice Chair Foster addressed the audience with an overview of the Commission's charge and stated that the Commission will submit its final report to the Governor in May. The purpose of the hearing is to take public testimony on the issue of expanded gaming in NH. He reviewed the hearing ground rules and procedures for speakers. Written comments will be taken until April 16, 2010.

Commissioners introduced themselves.

Clair Oursler, Granite State Coalition on Gambling – Spoke against gaming, having a personal history with the negative effects of gambling through a cousin who lost everything, i.e., property and family, because of gambling. He suggested that the Commission read "The Money and the Power: The Making of Las Vegas and Its Hold on America," by Sally Denton and Roger Morris. The book details his concerns about the social and political influence of gambling, and how it would devastate the NH presidential primary and impact campaign finance. Mr. Oursler stated that gaming won't bring that many construction jobs to NH, nor will such jobs be long-term.

Liam Doherty, Manchester – Spoke in support of gaming as jobs and state revenues are needed in these current economic times.

Elaine Driscoll, Concerned Women for America – Strongly opposed gaming. She spoke to those who live in gaming states and they said gaming has been devastating to communities and that the monies were not going to the programs as promised, such as schools in CA. Gaming is not the solution that is needed. Her discussions with planning board members in the gaming States (i.e., NJ, NY, CT and RI) have indicated that the towns cannot provide the support services needed. The casino-related jobs are low-paying and short-term. The casinos bring in the high skilled workers from out-of-state. NH is known for its "mom and pop" environment which would be lost. Foxwoods and Mohegan Sun have resulted in increased crime driven by gambling addiction. NH is creative and needs another answer for jobs.

John Allen – Spoke against gaming, having been a former NJ resident. He was involved in the gaming debate for Atlantic City. The casinos led to upgrading the boardwalk; however, the community beyond the "fence," housing the service workers, is not well off. Higher-paid professionals came from out-of-state. The service industry workers required more State services, than what was contributed to the State. Organized crime did not come about from the casinos, but from the support and construction sectors through drug problems. Mr. Allen recognized that the gaming potential for NH is not to the same scale as in NJ, but the cost and risk is still large.

Jerry Gappens, NH Motor Speedway – Spoke in support of gaming. As Executive VP, he testified before Senate Finance and House Local & Regulated Revenues committees providing the Speedway's feasibility study as a gaming site. The State needs to generate revenue to address its deficit and can do so by bringing visitors to NH, just as the Speedway is a draw. Construction jobs from gaming can cover a 24-month duration while the economy stabilizes. When the State's job fair was overrun at the Manchester facility, the Speedway provided a venue that could accommodate the 6,000 job seekers attending the second job fair. The Speedway has been a good partner with the State, drawing visitors who don't require State support services and having invested \$10 million in onsite upgrades. The Speedway is concerned that the current legislative bills have pre-determined potential gaming sites,

which excludes the Speedway. Mr. Gappens provided information related to the Speedway's feasibility study, including types of gaming, job projections and tax revenues. A copy of the report will be submitted to the Commission. Mr. Gappens reiterated that the bid process for potential gaming sites should be open, rather than predetermined.

Peg Fargo, League of Women Voters of NH – Spoke against gaming and opposed funding government through gambling. She suggested that the State find more stable sources for revenue, levied on a broad segment of society and direct taxes upon those who benefit. In the current, critical economy, the State must examine its services and revenues. Gambling does not address its long-term impacts, and will close or reduce the unique businesses that NH is known for. Gambling would create addictive/compulsive behaviors that are hard to control. Where will the communities and families who will need the social services turn to for help? Ms. Fargo provided statistics on the increase in social needs from gaming States. She asks if this is where the State should be spending. She was also concerned about internet gambling and its addictive affect on young people.

John Jackson, Carpenters Union – Spoke in support of gaming. He has been in construction for 35 years and the current economic slow down is the worst he's seen, probably since the Great Depression. It has had a destructive affect on employment. Although gaming is not the solution to everything, it will bring much needed jobs.

That was the end of formal public testimony. Mr. Allen asked the Commission if he could ask a question of Mr. Gappens. Vice Chair Foster stated that the hearing was to accept public testimony and comment, and not for informal discussion. However, Mr. Foster allowed the question.

Mr. Allen asked Mr. Gappens if Route 106 and water/sewer upgrades were included in the NH Motor Speedway feasibility study. Mr. Gappens said the study was focused on the gaming aspect, but the Speedway has the infrastructure needed to support 100,000 visitors. However, if expansion were pursued, they would continue to work with NH DOT on the widening of Route 106, which serves as a main corridor to the Lakes Region.

With no other testimony, Vice Chair Foster informed the audience that the Commission's report will have recommendations on what the State and towns would need to do to prepare for expanded gaming should the State do so.

The hearing was adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Four written comments were filed that night. All four were in support of gaming. One comment was from one of the speakers.

Respectfully submitted: Torene Tango-Lowy.