

Mall casino developer undeterred, breaks ground - Annapolis Capital

Written by Administrator
Friday, 28 January 2011 11:52 -

"It's frivolous, and we're breaking ground right on schedule," David Cordish said after the groundbreaking ceremony for the Maryland Live! casino, next to Arundel Mills mall. "My question is: Who's paying for (the appeal?) Filing appeals, all that gets very expensive."

Cordish hinted that Penn National Gaming Inc., part-owner of the Maryland

Jockey Club, is funding the appeal from the Villages of Dorchester Homeowners Association Inc. and three of its residents.

The Jockey Club and Penn National spent millions of dollars financing the No Slots at the Mall campaign during the last election, so it would make sense that it would fund the challenge, Cordish said.

"It's a very good bet," he said. "And they can do it in a lot of ways, directly or indirectly."

Eric Schippers, a spokesman for Penn National, didn't return a call seeking comment Thursday.

Harry Blumenthal, the lawyer representing the residents, said Thursday that he has filed an appeal with the county Board of Appeals contesting Cordish's site development plan for Maryland Live! County planners approved the plan late last year.

"The appeal involves only one issue, which is adequacy of the road system, and the only people concerned and affected by proposed road improvements are those owning property and living near Arundel Mills mall," Blumenthal said.

In November, 55 percent of county voters approved Question A, the referendum that approved zoning for slots at the Hanover mall, ending nearly two years of debate.

County Executive John R. Leopold, a staunch supporter of the casino, also pointed a finger at Penn National.

Mall casino developer undeterred, breaks ground - Annapolis Capital

Written by Administrator

Friday, 28 January 2011 11:52 -

"I think they're the driving force behind this appeal," Leopold said after the groundbreaking. "They spent \$7 million trying to block this project."

He, too, dismissed the latest challenge as frivolous and said he didn't expect it to halt construction of the casino.

"The Board of Appeals will begin their review, and I hope they will do it expeditiously," Leopold said.

During the groundbreaking, he noted that Baltimore-based Questar Properties Inc. has plans to build 500 luxury apartments "within a stone's throw of the casino."

Held behind the mall, beneath life-sized artists' renderings of the casino, Thursday's ceremony drew dozens of supporters, including representatives of the Anne Arundel County fire and police unions.

Kevin Johnson, president of Commercial Interiors in Hanover, will be the construction manager and general contractor for the casino project.

Johnson said he believes he'll be the first minority contractor in the state to take on such a large-scale project.

"This is a historic moment," he said.

Lt. Gov. Anthony G. Brown and Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller Jr., D-Calvert, also attended. Both praised Cordish for making the casino a reality.

The casino, which will hold 4,750 slot machines within two years, is expected to generate 2,500

Mall casino developer undeterred, breaks ground - Annapolis Capital

Written by Administrator

Friday, 28 January 2011 11:52 -

construction jobs and 1,500 permanent jobs. A temporary facility with about half as many slot machines will be up and running within a year.

Joseph Piazzola, of Hanover, is one resident who's looking for a job at the casino. The unemployed security guard said he campaigned hard for Question A - the only resident in his neighborhood to do so.

"This is a brilliant project," Piazzola said. "The mall attracts so many visitors a year, it's going to bring in so much revenue."

Cordish said he expects the casino to bring \$400 million in revenue for the state during its first year of operation.

"This is more than just groundbreaking - this was a groundbreaking for Maryland's economy," Brown said. "I know this was a difficult race along the way, but the people of Anne Arundel County spoke resoundingly."

[Powered By WizardRSS](#)

Source: http://news.google.com/news/url?sa=t&fd=R&usg=AFQjCNE_mR_Oejx_8E3J_frhqqHQID3Fgw&url=http://www.hometownannapolis.com/cgi-bin/read/2011/01_28-19/TOP