

Gambling commission unveils two-track plan for Southeastern Mass. casino development

Written by Administrator

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By Mark Arsenault, Globe Staff

The state gambling commission today took the first tentative step toward opening Southeastern Massachusetts to commercial casino development, contemplating a plan to accept applications from commercial developers while simultaneously allowing the Mashpee Wampanoag tribe to continue its pursuit of a tribal casino in the area.

Should the tribe make significant progress, the commission would likely drop the commercial bids and allow the tribe to proceed, creating a potential risk for commercial developers who would need to invest money in pursuing a project that might never be licensed.

“This would pose a calculated risk,” said Commission Chairman Stephen Crosby, who noted that every casino company is in the business of taking odds.

The move is likely to be celebrated by potential commercial bidders, who have been stymied by language in state law that delays commercial casino development in Southeastern Massachusetts to give a federally-recognized tribe, presumably the Mashpee, time to make progress on a tribal casino. Tribal casinos are approved under a federal process; the Mashpee face major obstacles to winning approval, and commission members said they are concerned about Southeastern Massachusetts falling far behind the other regions.

The commission has authority to open Southeastern Massachusetts to commercial applicants whenever it concludes the Mashpee are unlikely to win federal approval to build a tribal casino.

After a lengthy discussion today, the panel designated Commissioner James McHugh, a former judge, to draw up a proposal for accepting commercial applications while respecting the tribe’s continued pursuit of a tribal casino. Commissioners intend to discuss the proposal next week. No vote is expected for several weeks.

Read more <http://news.google.com/news/url?sa=t&fd=R&usg=AFQjCNGnifX3s62kx>

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