

Stakes high for an urban casino

Written by Administrator
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Get ready for an urban casino because the rural option looks like a nonstarter.

Foxwoods has hit the same wall of community resistance in Milford that derailed Steve Wynn and New England Patriots owner Robert Kraft in Foxboro, so it's going to come down to Everett vs. Suffolk Downs for the grand prize: the Greater Boston resort casino license.

That's sweet redemption for Wynn, who now has a second chance in Everett, where residents love his plan.

Maybe Foxwoods doesn't care. Some say Foxwoods' \$400,000 up-front fee bought the Mashantucket Pequots a chance to sue the eventual Wynn-Suffolk victor and hold up the process long enough to keep the slot machines going in Connecticut. Hopefully, it won't go that way.

While Wynn and Suffolk both seem to have strong backing, their battle royale could come down to community support in the end, too.

Wynn's \$1.3 billion proposal has won over the hearts and minds of Everett residents, but Suffolk Downs must still contend with a small but vocal group of casino opponents. To make matters even more challenging, Suffolk Downs and its partner Caesars Entertainment must win votes in both Revere and East Boston.

That puts the Wynn Everett casino plan in the driver's seat.

For Boston residents, only a Suffolk Downs win would give the Hub a piece of the tax-revenue action. A Wynn victory means a huge boost for Everett.

With Mayor Thomas M. Menino retiring, it will be interesting to see whether the casinos become

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an issue in the campaign to succeed him.

If both casino proposals win community support, the next question is whether Wynn will decide to leave Everett residents at the altar.

Despite his Massachusetts ties — his parents were born in Revere — the Las Vegas mogul is seen by some as an outsider who has packed up and cut his losses in the past when the going got tough.

That would be a shame.

Wynn is a world-class casino operator who has earned the admiration of even his rivals.

Greater Boston deserves the kind of top-notch competition that would pit Wynn vs. Suffolk Downs to the bitter end.

Wynn's plan would clean up the former Monsanto chemical site and spruce up Everett's Mystic River area — a worthy task, but a big one even for someone with such deep pockets.

Suffolk Downs' \$1 billion plan would upgrade the aging horse track and likely spark improvements along Route 1A.

It's easy to make a good case for both investments.

But Greater Boston will get only one urban casino. Here's hoping we see a fair fight to the end, based on the merits. May the best plan win.

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