

Prince George's casino could exceed 3,000 slot machines, state lawyer says

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But that does not appear to be an “absolute maximum,” according to Robert T. Fontaine, a lawyer from the Attorney’s General Office who represents a state commission that picks Maryland casino locations.

That’s because another provision in Maryland gambling law gives the Location Commission the authority to award up to 4,750 machines to a casino if it’s in the public interest, Fontaine wrote in a June 25 letter to Donald C. Fry, the commission’s chairman.

“It is my view that the Location Commission is not prohibited from awarding more than 3,000 (machines) ... to the Prince George’s County operation licensee,” Fontaine said.

The letter comes as [three companies vie for the license](#) to build and operate a casino in a western swath of Prince George’s. Two of them put in bids in May for facilities with more than 3,000 slot machines, in addition to an array of Las Vegas-style table games, such as blackjack and roulette.

MGM Resorts is angling to build a casino with 3,600 slot machines [adjacent to National Harbor](#), the 300-acre mini-city on the banks of the Potomac River.

And the owners of Pennsylvania's Parx Casino have proposed an even larger facility further south in Fort Washington with the maximum 4,750 machines.

Penn National Gaming, meanwhile, has said [it wants to build a 3,000-machine casino](#) at Rosecroft Raceway, also in Fort Washington.

The Location Commission has started evaluating the three proposals, with the hope of making a decision by the end of the year, Fry said in an interview earlier this week.

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The process includes extensive background checks of the applicants, which prompted [a team from Maryland to visit China](#) last week to explore one of MGM's business relationships.

The commission also plans site visits to the three proposed locations this fall, Fry said.

In the past, the commission has allowed applicants to make amendments to their proposals before decisions are made.

Maryland Live, the largest of the state's four operating casinos, had a full compliment of 4,750 slot machines until recently. That number decreased to 4,314 in order for the casino to make room for 122 table games in April.

Table games were authorized in the same law last year that allowed a new casino in Prince George's. Slots were first authorized by Maryland voters in a 2008 referendum.

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