

## South Philly casino angers hundreds

Written by Administrator  
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**DAILY NEWS**

ANGERED BY rumors that the proposed "Live! Hotel & Casino" at the South Philly sports complex will be granted a license on Tuesday, more than 500 residents jammed Stella Maris Church school hall on 10th Street near Bigler last night to protest.

"Your civic leaders have done everything possible to stop this train wreck," said Barbara Capozzi, the Packer Park community director in the Sports Complex Special Services District.

"We don't want to be the next Atlantic City."

Capozzi said that if the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board chooses the site at Packer Avenue near 10th Street over 8th and Market or North Broad Street near Callowhill, it would be disastrous for the neighborhood's 9,000 residents in 4,100 households.

"With all the hoo-ha that we already put up with from sports and concerts and Xfinity Live! crowds, it's bedlam here on too many nights," Capozzi told the Daily News.

"For 11 years, we've worked in unison with the teams to counterbalance the nonsense we go through."

Comcast-Spectacor, the Phillies and the Eagles pay \$1 million annually to fund the special-services district, which cleans up after the invading hordes of fans and concertgoers.

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A casino would be the breaking point, Capozzi said.

"The closer a casino is to somebody, the more vulnerable they are," she said. "We have a ton of seniors living here. Maybe some of them are lonely. What could a casino give the community to compensate for seniors losing their homes [by gambling]?"

"SugarHouse Casino [in Fishtown] is a heartbreak," she said. "I went in there to hear a friend sing and I had to walk through an ashtray to get to the back of the room. It was all poor people.

"There was a lady in the bathroom crying because she just lost her rent money," Capozzi said. "I'm telling you, it ain't Vegas. If you are at all compassionate, SugarHouse is a sad place to be. I don't want that down here."

Capozzi told the residents that nobody could accuse them of being NIMBYs (not in my back yard) because, "Look at what we already have in our back yard!"

Chrystal Grimes, a parent with a child at Thomas Elementary School just a few blocks from the proposed casino, said young children might become "crime targets" of unsavory casino patrons.

When Grimes said that no one's "going to protect my child while he's waiting for the bus," she got a rousing ovation.

John "Johnny Doc" Dougherty, business manager of International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 98, made a surprise appearance after Capozzi said she didn't want to discuss the legal strategy for fighting the casino because she was sure there were enemies in the crowd.

"I'm not here as the enemy," Dougherty said. "I didn't want the casino here. I wanted the casino in town."

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Capozzi said: "Please don't be so defensive. I did not imply that you're the enemy."

She added, "To try to plant these seeds of discord is not very nice."

As the meeting broke up, Dougherty had his arm around a couple of older female residents, smiling and assuring them that he did not want the casino in their back yard.

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**On Twitter:** @DanGeringer

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