

To win casino, Southern Tier must pour on sparkle

Written by Administrator
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Casino(Photo: Shutterstock)

Plan big. Build it grand. Make it a money magnet.

That's the direction any potentially successful applicant for a Southern Tier casino got from the state gaming commission that opened a redo for the locating a gambling resort in the region.

Two plans for casinos in the actual Southern Tier got rejected Dec. 17. The commission chose the Lago Resort & Casino planned for the Town of Tyre in Seneca County, which is 25 miles south of Lake Ontario and nowhere near the Southern Tier.

But, one thing Lago had going for it is a \$425 million plan to build a big and grand casino with a good shot at pulling money from nearby Rochester and Syracuse and New York Thruway travelers.

Proposals from Tioga Downs in Nichols and Traditions Resort & Casino in the Town of Union were far more modest and got shoved off the table. The commission selected three plans from 16 proposals for casino resorts all vying for a maximum of four sites outside of the New York City area.

That decision set off a howl in the Southern Tier heard all the way to Albany, where Gov.

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Andrew Cuomo flipped from supporting the casino siting decision to asking the commissioners to reconsider a new round of bidding for a casino license in the region.

Back for the redo casino application is Tioga Downs owner Jeff Gural with support from the Walsh family of Broome County that proposed the Town of Union resort.

The task will be tough for Gural or any other Southern Tier casino developer still to emerge. The plan will have to do back flips to impress the five, unpaid gaming board members who have said the Tioga Downs and Traditions casino plans had little chance to become successful.

In the words of siting board chairman Kevin Law:

"And I think it's important to underscore neither of the two previous bids were suitable for the award, and at our last meeting I stated that we would not necessarily recommend an award of a fourth license unless we saw something better than what we previously were presented with."

The applications for a true Southern Tier casino are due July 6 with a decision expected in the fall. If there is a winner — and the siting board has said it may withhold a fourth license — the plan needs spectacular razzle and dazzle to be successful.

This editorial is adapted from one first published in the Press & Sun-Bulletin in Binghamton.

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