

## Philly casino proposal short of space

Written by Administrator

Wednesday, 19 August 2015 03:02 -

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The plan for Philadelphia's second casino does not meet zoning requirements because it lacks enough open space. Its proposed digital signs also exceed limits, a city planning commission official said Tuesday.

That means the \$500 million project in South Philadelphia requires two significant changes to the underlying zoning code, Martin Gregorski, director of the planning commission's development division, told commissioners during a presentation on Live! Hotel & Casino Philadelphia.

"They don't have the open space that is required - although they are having a two-acre-plus green roof on top of the building that officially does not count for its open space," Gregorski said.

The meeting marked the beginning of public efforts by Stadium Casino L.L.C., a partnership of Cordish Cos., of Baltimore, and Greenwood Racing Inc., owner of Parx Casino, in Bensalem, to win local approvals for their proposal.

Until now, efforts to start building have been stalled by an appeal to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court of the license award. Filings in the appeal were completed last week, which means the justices can either schedule oral arguments or make a decision based on the briefs.

Assuming that the license stands, the partners in Live! Hotel & Casino Philadelphia still need to have a special zoning ordinance passed by City Council and to obtain Planning Commission approval of their master plan for the site at 900 Packer Ave.

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The purpose of Tuesday's presentation, which went into great detail on the layout of the casino, was to introduce the casino plan, not seek approval. That will come later.

Members of the planning commission, including Nancy Rogo Trainer, Drexel University's associate vice president of planning, wanted to hear more about how the project fits into the Stadium District.

"Think about the pedestrian experience between Citizens Bank Park and Live!" Trainer urged the partners, who were represented by Greenwood Gaming chief executive Anthony Ricci and Zed Smith, Cordish's chief operating officer.

Richard W. Hayden, a Saul Ewing lawyer representing Live!, said the partners had reached deals to win support from three neighborhood groups. Live! promised to spend \$175,000 a year on community projects even before the casino was built.

The annual support will then increase to \$500,000 in the first year of operation, Hayden said, before going to \$750,000 in the second. Then it will increase based on an index.

Local representatives of the National Action Network, a civil rights group, appeared at the planning meeting, urging the commissioners not to act on the Live! casino proposal until allegations of racist practices by Cordish Cos. at sites in Kansas City, Mo., and Lexington, Ky., are resolved.

The Black Clergy of Philadelphia & Vicinity last month published the result of an investigation that found no evidence of racism in the Cordish Cos.

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