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THE CITIZENS' VOICE FILE Mohegan Sun Pocono officials on Wednesday appealed the assessed \$152.5 million value of the Plains Township property.

PLAINS TWP. — Representatives for Mohegan Sun Pocono on Wednesday appealed the \$152.5 million assessed value of the property, alleging a Luzerne County Board of Assessment Appeals decision related to the alleged inflated valuation was “improper, unsatisfactory and unlawful.”

The appeal sets off a high-stakes court battle between the cash-strapped Wilkes-Barre Area School District — which seeks to bolster its coffers with taxes from one of the county's most valuable properties — and the casino — which stands to lose nearly \$800,000 in additional property taxes per year if the assessed value stands.

Documents filed Wednesday by attorneys Wendy G. Rothstein and Thomas J. MacNeely allege the assessed value reached in June is “unjust and inequitable” and is “substantially greater than the actual fair market value of the premises.”

Under a 2007 agreement to settle a lawsuit over the previous assessed value, the casino had to pay the school district a \$15 million payment in lieu of taxes over eight years and an additional \$6 million to Luzerne County and Plains Township.

During that period, the casino underwent a major expansion with the addition in November 2013 of a \$50 million, seven-story hotel and convention center to the existing casino, which also features the racetrack, restaurants and bars.

Casino challenges Plains Twp. property's assessment - News

Written by Administrator

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With the previous tax agreement at an end, Luzerne County re-assessed the property in June for \$152.5 million — a figure that would give the school district about \$562,000 in new taxes, as well as about \$223,000 to the county and \$9,000 to Plains Township.

Both parties have challenged the assessed value, with the casino claiming it is too high and the school district asserting it is too low.

Representatives on both sides previously agreed to take the battle over the assessment to court, resulting in the casino's appeal filed Wednesday.

The filings seek to have a county judge reverse the board's decision and reduce the assessment to what casino representatives claim is its "fair market value."

The casino is also seeking to recoup attorneys fees and other costs associated with the lawsuit.

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