

Westmoreland communities place their bets on windfall from casino revenue

Written by Administrator

Wednesday, 05 October 2022 04:00 -

Community leaders are hoping to be flush with cash after they placed their bets on winning a share of \$3.75 million in local casino revenue.

A portion of the money that gamblers spent having fun at Live! Casino Pittsburgh in Hempfield last year could be used for community upgrades such as street paving and LED lighting, fire hall and recreational area improvements, and even police car purchases.

Government organizations had until Sept. 30 to apply for a share of the money generated through a 4% assessment on slot machine revenue and 2% on table game revenue collected since the casino opened in November 2020.

Local officials will have to wait until the Commonwealth Financing Authority meets in March to learn if their applications are approved, said Chad Newton, spokesman for the Department of Community and Economic Development.

After this multiyear windfall, the allocation will be doled out on an annual basis and likely will range from \$1.5 million to \$2 million, Newton said.

While the opportunity to apply for the local share of the gambling revenue is great, Allegheny Township Manager Greg Primm said he is disappointed that the authority charged municipalities \$100 for each application. Primm said in some 30 years on the job, he never has seen the state charge a fee for an application for funding.

“We’re having to gamble (with taxpayer money) to see if we even get the money,” Primm said of the \$500 the township must pay.

The state is compiling a complete list of applicants, but some of them include:

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- The county parks department asked for \$300,000 to purchase heavy land-moving equipment and mowers “to keep two trails and three regional parks in the county well maintained and safe for public use.” Finance Director Meghan McCandless said the department partnered with the Regional Trail Corp. on the request.

- The county’s redevelopment authority filed an application for \$750,000 to build an access road at the Derry Business Park in Derry Borough, a 20-acre property that was the former home to the Westinghouse Electric Corp. and Industrial Ceramics.

The formerly blighted property is being reconfigured into an industrial park.

Redevelopment Authority Executive Director Brian Lawrence said grant funds are needed help pay for the installation of an access road at the property.

- Hempfield will receive host money this year — about \$1 million — to help pay for [renovations to the North Hempfield Fire Hall](#). This includes adding space for two fire trucks and a Mutual Aid ambulance, as well as locker rooms, offices and a kitchen, said township manager Jason Winters.

Like other municipalities, Hempfield also applied for local share account funding of \$40,000 for fire department gear, Winters said.

- New Kensington applied for \$11,000 for portable LED radar signals to slow speeding motorists, particularly along Freeport Road, said municipal clerk Dennis Scarpiniti.

- Allegheny Township is seeking money for five projects — none greater than \$20,000 — to increase the likelihood of having the applications approved, Primm said. The township wants \$15,215 for eight radios for the Markle Fire Department and \$19,000 for a new garage door for the Allegheny Volunteer Fire Company’s hall. The township also wants \$15,058 for a stormwater project on Frederick Drive, \$14,385 for portable speed monitoring signs and \$6,000 for diagnostic scanners for a heavy duty truck.

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- Penn Township officials applied for audio and video upgrades worth \$22,060 for the municipal meeting room, said township secretary-manager Mary Perez. Replacing and upgrading the hardware and software would allow viewers to see and hear the meetings that are streamed online.

“We are currently using outdated hardware and software. We are using a tablet with an extension cord to stream to Facebook. We’re using a bluetooth speaker to attempt to project the sound, but we still receive complaints that it is very difficult to hear. Our transcription software is outdated, as is the computer we currently use to host the software,” Perez said.

- Unity applied for \$209,000 to build a 6-foot-high security fence around its new public works garage at the municipal complex, said chairman of the board of supervisors Mike O’Barto. The former public works garage, which was not surrounded by a security fence, was destroyed in an arson [in September 2017](#) .

If the application is approved, O’Barto said Unity would get about \$187,000 from the state, with the remainder covered by the township.

- Irwin applied for funding to repave, reline and install new lighting along the Second Street parking lot and to improve landscaping around the Irwin sign that is in a green space along Route 30, borough manager Shari Martino said.

The borough also is seeking \$123,000 to digitize a sign that displays community announcements along Pennsylvania Avenue. It is an older-style sign where the letters are placed by hand onto the display board, Martino said. It also wants \$138,000 to repave Sweden Alley.

- Jeannette is seeking \$2.5 million to repave Clay Avenue from Second Street through Ninth Street and add new drainage, said city fiscal officer Ethan Keedy. The city also is seeking \$500,000 for work along the 900 block of Clay Avenue, installing new storm drains and separating the combined stormwater and sewage pipes to reduce the load on the sewage plant during storms. That amount also would cover similar work along Cypress Avenue and Linden Drive, Keedy said.

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- North Huntingdon applied for \$140,000 to buy four vehicles — two for the planning department, one for the parks and recreation department and one for police Chief Robert Rizzo, said township manager Harry Faulk.

The township also applied for \$1,500 to buy an automatic external defibrillator for the J. Howard Snyder Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 781 in North Huntingdon.

- Latrobe applied for \$10,000 to install LED lighting at City Hall, said city manager Terry Carcella. “It’ll save us money on our electrical bills for 2023,” Carcella said.

- Trafford wants funding to enhance security with cameras around the municipal complex on Brinton Avenue, B-Y Park, the borough’s playgrounds and the Veterans Memorial Park. The borough applied for about \$17,000, said borough manager Jaime Peticca.

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