

MGM boss: Not realistic for Springfield casino to get to 3,000 employees

Written by Administrator
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The president and CEO of MGM Resorts said Friday it's "not a real notion" to expect its Springfield casino to return to its originally promised number of 3,000 jobs.

On a visit to Springfield to meet with city officials, Bill Hornbuckle said the resort employed 1,440 employees, with 279 openings.

"[The] milestone ought to be like 2,000 employees, not [3,000]," he said, according to audio recorded by [WAMC](#) . "Let's just come to an understanding here: If it's [3,000], something dynamically has changed in this marketplace. It has to, in order to have that happen. Our original valuation of this market simply was off — full stop."

Gambling revenues are [about \\$22 million a month](#) , far off from [MGM's projections](#) . Hornbuckle said the casino opened with more than 2,900 employees, in August 2018. The numbers [dropped significantly](#) in the months that followed.

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Hornbuckle blamed the even smaller staff now on the COVID-19 pandemic, in-part. But he also said the company misread the Springfield market.

"We thought there would be more business here than ultimately materialized — scale, scope, etc. And so, it is what it is. And so we're pushing forward. We're trying to make the very best of it," he said.

Hornbuckle came to Springfield a few weeks after some local officials again [questioned MGM's commitment](#) to the city. They pointed to a discrimination lawsuit filed by a former employee, who claimed the casino [fudged its workforce diversity numbers](#) .

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Hornbuckle on Friday declined to comment on the lawsuit. He noted the company had kept its financial commitments to Springfield, with \$107 million going to the city, and said he has a "deep, deep respect for this community."

Asked about specific benchmarks MGM was looking for, Hornbuckle said he wanted the Springfield casino to "lean in more on community communications." He said the company has forecasts and budgets, but no "economic benchmark, per se."

"If there was an economic motivator of real scale, you know, in retrospect, this project would have never happened," he said.

Hornbuckle said he wants to bring MGM Springfield "back to life." He announced the reopening and expanded hours of some restaurants and non-gambling activities. He also said the casino expects to open for sports betting later this month.

Mayor Domenic Sarno thanked Hornbuckle for visiting and for delivering his message "bluntly."

"We have to acknowledge how [the] COVID-19 pandemic has affected each and every one of us for the last two and a half years. But the message here is that things are being repurposed, retooled, and we're still looking to get to those goals," Sarno said. "That's the whole thing with MGM and continued city projects, whether downtown or in our neighborhoods. So we're not going to lose focus on that. We're not going to give up."

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