

BERLIN -- After a test run of the Casino at Ocean Downs under the scrutiny of the State Lottery Agency, attendees praised the casino as an impressive entertainment venue.

By close of business Thursday, the state agency had not announced whether it had issued an after-test slots

license needed for the \$45 million gaming parlor to open. A license would be needed for the building to open when a ribbon-cutting and grand opening is scheduled for Tuesday, the first day the general public is expected to be invited inside. "I thought it was a first-class facility," said County Commissioner Judy Boggs after attending the controlled demonstration. "Everything was beautiful, without the noise and sensory overload of a Las Vegas casino."

If it opens on schedule, the Casino at Ocean Downs will be the state's second modern slots parlor. A 2008 voter referendum approving slot machine gambling opened the door for five parlors to be built. The Hollywood Casino in Cecil County was the first venture to get off the ground.

The test demonstration was not only a chance for the casino to leap over its final hurdle on the way to being fully operational, but a chance to contribute money to local chapters of the American Legion. Thirty-three percent of the day's profits will be donated to the Legion. Hundreds of American Legion members were also invited to test out the service, slot machines and facilities.

Sarge Garlitz, commander of Post 166 in Ocean City, said the event was a success.

"It was totally off the charts," Garlitz said. "I had no idea what to expect. I had never been in a casino before."

Several representatives of local and state government are expected to attend the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the \$45 million facility, containing 750 slot machines, which is scheduled to begin at noon followed by the official opening at 1 p.m.

"Be among the first to experience the action-packed excitement of over 700 slots at the East Coast's newest casino," read the casino's opening-day advertisements.

In a nod to opponents' worries that Maryland will develop social problems because of gambling, the ads include a toll-free number, 1-800-522-4700, that offers help for people with problem gambling habits.

Once the casino is open, it will begin to pay taxes on gaming revenues, 5.5 percent of which will be set aside for local impact grants. Of that, 60 percent will go to Worcester County, 20 percent to Ocean City, 10 percent to Berlin and 10 percent to Ocean Pines.

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Written by Administrator

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