

Posted: January 5

Updated: Today at 1:50 AM

License for casino not on agenda

Mohegan Sun

at Pocono Downs, Sands Bethlehem have objected.

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A Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board spokesman announced on Tuesday that a vote to award the final Category 3 resort casino license will not be on the agenda for its regularly scheduled meeting Thursday.

The applicants for the license include Fernwood Resort in Middle Smithfield Township, Monroe County. Mohegan Sun at Pocono Downs in Plains Township and Sands Bethlehem have filed objections to that facility getting a license, claiming the region is already saturated and any more slot machines would cannibalize revenues from existing facilities.

Fernwood is battling three other hotels for the state's second and final Category 3 license. The other applicants are Penn Harris Gaming for the Holiday Inn Harrisburg in Mechanicsburg, Cumberland County, Mason-Dixon Resort and Casino in Gettysburg, Adams County, and Nemacolin Woodland Resort and Spa in Farmington, Fayette County.

"A vote on the Category 3 license will not be on Thursday's meeting agenda," said gaming control board spokesman Doug Harbach. "At the same time, the board members continue to evaluate the proposals, reviewing and weighing the substantial evidence received from the Category 3 applicants along with public testimony in an attempt to achieve the qualified majority vote that is required to license one of these projects."

The board's next meeting is scheduled for 10 a.m. Wednesday, Jan. 26 in Harrisburg.

The first of the two available Category 3 licenses was awarded to Valley Forge Resort Casino on April 8, 2009. The license allows up to 600 slots machines and 50 table games.

Also on Tuesday, the gaming board released slot revenue for the state's 10 operating casinos.

The amount of gross revenue generated in December 2010 rose 12.72 percent over the previous year. The play of slot machines at the 10 operating casinos produced \$174,772,637 in gross revenue in December 2010 compared to \$155,048,230 in December 2009. But there were only nine operating casinos in 2009. When comparing just the nine casinos up and running in December 2009 and 2010, there was an increase of 6.51 percent in gross revenue.

Mohegan Sun reported an increase of 4.24 percent from December 2009 to December 2010. This past month, the casino had \$17.2 million in gross revenues from its slot machines, compared to \$16.5 million it reported in December 2009. Eight of the nine casinos that were in operation in December 2009 reported gross revenue increases. Only Harrah's Chester declined, by 13.99 percent.

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Wednesday, 05 January 2011 00:53 -

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