

Resort casino applicants could be in for long wait - abc27

Written by Administrator
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HARRISBURG, Pa. (WHTM) - The wheels are apparently spinning behind closed doors at the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board, where seven members are trying to decide who hits the jackpot of a Category 3 resort casino gaming license.

The Board announced Tuesday that it would not take a public vote as scheduled during its Jan. 6 meeting, postponing action for the second time since

December.

"The bottom line is they're not to the point of being able to agree as a group and then go forth and have a public vote on this matter," Board spokesman Doug Harbach said.

It's not as simple as a majority selecting the winner. Four of the seven are appointed by the four legislative caucuses, and those four must unanimously agree with one of the three gubernatorial appointees.

"Under the act they have to reach a consensus under what's called a qualified majority, all four legislative members have to agree, so you can see it's quite a process," Harbach said.

But time matters. By the end of the month, the four members appointed by the caucuses could be replaced, further delaying the process - which some lawmakers insist isn't such a bad thing.

"Getting it done right and getting it done with quality is the better thing to do," House Republican spokesman Steve Miskin said. That's where the board should go. We think that's where they should err. You want to capitalize property tax relief, not political contribution relief."

The Board is considering applications from four groups: the West Shore Casino Resort in Hampden Township, Mason-Dixon Resort and Casino in Gettysburg, Nemaocolin Woodland Resort and Spa in southwestern Pennsylvania, and Fernwood Hotel and Resort in the Poconos.

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Conventional wisdom suggests Nemaquin Woodlands was a slam dunk to get the final license. The current holdup suggests that's not the case.

"There's no slam dunk in this. There's four good applicants, all qualified, and are eligible for this license," Harbach said.

All four will have to wait a bit longer, maybe a lot longer, before a winner is announced. The three governor's picks to the board are set for awhile. Two of the four legislative picks must be replaced. If a decision doesn't come down before they go, it could be months and months before the license is awarded.

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