

Inquirer Editorial: Time's up for Foxwoods - Philadelphia Inquirer

Written by Administrator

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How many more rolls of the dice is the state going to give the long-stalled Foxwoods Casino project?

It has been four years since the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board awarded a license to Foxwoods. At the time, about

the only thing the project had going for it was an A-list of political heavyweights with close ties to Gov. Rendell. But even that hasn't been enough to grease the skids to open this gambling hall.

Not that anyone should be itching to see another casino in Philadelphia. One is already too many. But it would be nice if the state would at least enforce the flimsy gaming rules that were written behind closed doors and passed in the dark of night.

Instead, the gaming board has allowed Foxwoods to try to rewrite rules and miss deadlines as it stumbles along.

The main problem with Foxwoods has always been its location - on the water but along a busy street too close to homes in South Philadelphia. When the location proved problematic, as predicted, Foxwoods tried to move near the Gallery in Center City. Never mind rules required the casino to be built at the site where the license was issued.

Then Foxwoods' principal financial backer - an Indian tribe with a Connecticut casino headed by a felon - ran into financial trouble. Out went the Mashantucket Pequots and, like the cavalry coming to the rescue, in came Steve Wynn from Las Vegas. But after talking a big game for a few weeks, Wynn meekly retreated to Sin City.

Now Harrah's Entertainment is said to be coming in. Never mind the license was issued for one set of owners, and Foxwoods is working on its third operator. Or that Harrah's already has a casino in Chester. Apparently, all gaming-board rules are subject to change.

Meanwhile, questions remain regarding the role of three high-powered investors who also have been regular campaign contributors to Rendell - real estate developer Ron Rubin, South Jersey lawyer Lewis Katz, and Comcast-Spectacor chairman Ed Snider.

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Turns out, Rubin, Katz, and Snider never went through the original background checks required for other license holders. The process is long but thorough, and requires vetting all business dealings, investments, legal entanglements, and personal information. Rubin and Snider are now complying, but Katz is challenging the request - once again trying to circumvent the rules.

Initially, the three said their share of casino profits would go into a charitable trust. But that murky arrangement could allow them to donate proceeds to nonprofit entities that engage in lobbying or political campaigns.

The gaming board is expected to meet Tuesday to sort out Foxwoods' situation. That should be easy. After four years of ignoring and evading rules, it's time to pull the plug on this three-card monte.

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