

Written by Administrator
Thursday, 10 February 2011 11:27 -

Published: Thursday, February 10, 2011, 12:20 PM **Updated: Thursday, February 10, 2011, 12:56 PM**

WAYLAND TOWNSHIP -- Inside the 76,000 square feet of the [Gun Lake Casino](#), there are 1,400 slot/video poker machines and 28 table games, but there's something missing -- at least for this potential patron.

A poker room.

Original plans for the \$157 million casino off U.S. 131, which opens Friday, included a poker room. But when [numbers started getting crunched](#), the decision was made to leave it out, at least for now, according to director of marketing Carter Pavey.

"It was a tough decision to make," Pavey said. "Poker players, they're out there, but it's kind of a niche market. With the limited space we had to work with, we had to go with the most appealing to the crowds.

"Down the road, it is possible in the future."

Gun Lake Casino is similar in size to [Little River Casino](#) in Manistee, which had a six-table poker room that recently closed. New, and much larger, casinos such as [Four Winds](#) in New Buffalo and [FireKeepers](#) in Battle Creek both include poker rooms.

"We've looked at the other poker rooms in the area," Pavey said. "They get their times when they're busy, but there's a lot of times they're not busy."

After taking a tour of Gun Lake Casino on Wednesday, it's hard to figure where a poker room -- or even a few tables -- would be located. Slot machines line the outer rims of the rectangular facility, and the pit area for table games sits in the center.

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"We've talked about maybe putting a table or two inside the main pit," Pavey said. "In our minds, that's kind of a disservice. It would take away from the whole poker feel. We didn't want to go down that route.

"We would like to have a poker room, but we just couldn't put it into the plan."

Pavey is correct there. Plopping a couple of tables in the middle of the casino's pit area is a bad idea.

How about eliminating some of the slot machines along one of the walls, creating an area where a few tables could be cornered off?

Possible, but a penny-slot machine likely will be more valuable to Gun Lake Casino's demographic and, once it's in place, is lot a cheaper to maintain than a poker area.

With charity poker games available across West Michigan and casinos such as FireKeepers, Four Winds and [Soaring Eagle Casino and Resort](#) in Mount Pleasant within driving distance, finding a game isn't a problem for a serious player.

And with promises such as \$5 blackjack every day and a Jumbo Jackpot slot promotion that can reward any player who has his frequent players card in a machine when it hits, there's a good chance Gun Lake Casino will have an opportunity to expand in the future.

Here's hoping those plans include a poker room.

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