

Krafts put Foxborough casino issue to bed once and for all - Your Town

Written by Administrator
Sunday, 10 March 2013 22:10 -

FOXBOROUGH — Linger concerns that a casino proposal could reemerge in Foxborough were eased last week when a Kraft Group official said the \$1 billion gaming initiative that turned the town on its ear last spring is dead and buried.

“We have no desire, no intention, and no plans,” said Dan Murphy, vice president of business development and external affairs. “We have moved on.”

On Tuesday, selectmen met with Murphy and Patriot Place general manager Brian Earley to further mend the relationship strained when talks about Route 1 economic development stalled and criticism that some establishments over-served alcohol ramped up.

Earley said in a presentation that the mall has generated far fewer police and medical calls than originally projected, while bringing millions into the community.

Yielding to Selectwoman Lynda Walsh’s pointed request that he once and for all banish “the elephant in the room,” the casino complex proposed on land the Krafts own on Route 1, Murphy said, “I can look you in the eye and say we haven’t had a single discussion about this since May.”

That was when New England Patriots owner Robert Kraft and Las Vegas casino developer Steve Wynn withdrew the casino plan for land across from Gillette Stadium after months of heated opposition and a landslide town vote that elected two casino opponents and ousted a supporter.

Launching his PowerPoint presentation, Earley said his goal was to bridge the gap between perception and reality, not only about public safety and alcohol questions in the five-year-old Patriot Place mall, but also about the organization’s search for a new purpose for its land, after the casino proposal was abandoned.

“We are examining existing trends and future opportunities,” Earley said. “When the

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opportunity arises, we know the process.”

Town Manager Kevin Paicos characterized the past year with the town’s largest taxpayer as obviously tough.

“There’s no doubt about it,” he said. “But it’s easy to focus on the negative and not the positive. The Kraft organization is our biggest business partner and a unique asset to this community.”

The Krafts paid Foxborough \$1.4 million in 2007-2008 to ramp up public safety services and staff as the mall opened, Earley said. It also handed over the first of 10 annual \$140,000 payments for public safety, and has since paid millions in meals, hotel, and property taxes, he said.

Patriot Place has not come close to seeing the number of police and medical calls projected in a fiscal impact report the town commissioned in 2006, he said. At the time, at least 1,200 police calls a year were estimated when the project was fully built out, but in 2012, the mall saw 895 calls, of which just 251 resulted in custody or arrest, Earley said. “That’s less than 75 percent of the projection,” he said.

The report further estimated about 365 medical calls annually, one for each day of the year, Earley said. But 2012 saw just 222 such calls, almost all of them reimbursable by insurance.

Mall management has worked with its 14 liquor -licensees on training and compliance, and this year instituted a New Year’s Eve Safe Ride pilot program that ferried home 14 inebriated patrons, Earley said.

A number of business owners told selectmen during the meeting that they have the highest regard for the Krafts, their landlords.

“I’ve never really understood where this antagonism for -Patriot Place has come from in town,”

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said Bill Martin, who with his wife owns Tastings Wine & Bistro.

Selectwoman Lorraine Brue acknowledged that the number of issues at Patriot Place is insignificant compared with the legions of visitors who patronize it.

But, she added, “there are other statistics we need to look at about public safety,” an apparent reference to the number of alcohol-related protective custodies during events at Gillette Stadium, which the Krafts also own.

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