

Casino forum set for Tuesday in Lake George

Written by Administrator
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LAKE GEORGE -- Local residents will have a chance on Tuesday to voice where they stand on casino gambling in Warren County, when village officials host a public forum on the issue.

Lake George Mayor Robert Blais called for the forum to garner feedback about the possibility of casino gambling.

The forum will be held at 6 p.m. Tuesday at the Fort William Henry Hotel and Conference Center.

"We just hope to get a good sampling of how the people feel," Blais said.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo earlier this year outlined a plan to boost tourism and development in upstate New York with as many as three resort gambling casinos, which would be subject to a referendum.

A state casino gambling plan would focus on drawing New York City residents north, rather than patronizing casinos in New Jersey and Connecticut.

Neighboring upstate counties expressed their interest in a gaming casino.

Officials in Saratoga Springs have coordinated efforts to pitch the Spa City, which already has some gaming at the Saratoga Casino & Raceway, as a casino site. Essex County and Moriah town officials wrote separate letters to Cuomo asking for sites to be considered for a casino if casino gaming is expanded in New York.

The room where Tuesday's forum will be held seats 150 people, and based on the number of phone calls village officials have received about the issue, Blais expects a strong turnout, he said.

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Attorney Robert Sturges will speak at the meeting and answer questions.

Sturges, who served as deputy attorney general of organized crime in New Jersey, is a past president of Carnival Cruise lines and led the company's gaming division from 1994 to 2001. He was also CEO of Nevada Gold Casinos from 2006 to 2012.

Attorney Michael Garry of Albany will also speak about the Roaring Brook Ranch Resort's efforts to bring a casino to Warren County.

Questions remain among local officials about whether Warren County would even be considered for a casino site, and about the impact of a previous gaming compact between the state and American Indian tribes that give the tribes exclusive rights to casinos in certain areas of the state, including Warren County.

Village officials will host the forum, and Blais has invited other local officials.

Lake George Town Supervisor Dennis Dickinson plans to attend the forum and continue to gather information on the issue.

Dickinson said if state officials are looking for sites that could support a destination casino that would include a variety of leisure activities aside from gaming, such as golf, theaters, swimming and restaurants, the Roaring Brook Ranch Resort could be a contender.

"I think it's important to get all of the information — good, bad or indifferent," Dickinson said. "I have a lot of questions. The problem when you talk about casino gambling is no one knows the answers, so we're all standing around."

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