

Developer Nunes back in leadership of Milford casino project - Metro

Written by Administrator
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Developer David Nunes, who lost control of his Milford casino venture in March after a coup by his investment partners, is back as the project's chief development officer, return-ing a familiar face to the proposal as it enters a critical period of rolling out new details and building support among town officials and voters.

Nunes, who has worked for five years to bring a casino to Milford, will assist Foxwoods chief executive Scott Butera "in the overall development, which runs the gamut from site usage to construction to financing," Nunes said Friday. Foxwoods, the massive Connecticut gambling resort, joined the Milford proposal as a partner in February. The \$1 billion project will be called -Foxwoods Massachusetts Resort.

"My role is one that helps Scott in pulling the whole thing together," said Nunes, who said he brings "local knowledge" and "a great history working with the people in Milford" to the leadership team.

Nunes had alerted Milford officials April 4 that he would no longer be active in any negotiations with the town on behalf of the casino proposal, explaining that his investment partners, whom Nunes recruited before Foxwoods joined the effort, had informed him in March through a "cease and -desist" letter that he no longer had authority to act on behalf of the partnership.

The unspecified dispute among the partners has been ironed out, said Nunes. "Fortunately I have partners and investors who were willing and able to work through our differences," he said. "We put them aside. We put them behind us, and now we're all looking forward."

Nunes has been the public face of the Milford project since 2008, three years before Massachusetts legalized casinos.

The Milford venture is facing a potentially decisive stretch over the next several weeks. The developers are scheduled to present new resort plans to Milford selectmen on June 3, to explain a Foxwoods-led overhaul of earlier designs for the project. Previous plans and renderings are "being -revised in a major league way," said Nunes.

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If the presentation goes well, the Milford partnership will seek to begin formal negotiations with town officials about the terms under which the town would accept the project, Butera said in an interview. The developer would commit in the negotiations to making payments to address possible negative effects of the project.

“Clearly, we’ve done our homework,” said Butera. “We’ve seen what the community needs. Our host community agreement would address what the town of -Milford desires.”

Once an agreement is reached, the project would then need to win the endorsement of Milford voters in a referendum before it can complete its application for a casino license.

The suburban Milford project is in a fierce competition for the sole Greater Boston resort casino license with two urban entries: Suffolk Downs, which has proposed a casino at the East Boston racetrack with partner Caesars Entertainment; and Wynn Resorts, which is pitching a hotel casino resort on the Mystic River water-front in Everett. The state gambling commission is -expected to award the license in early 2014.

Butera said his site, about 35 miles from Boston, has advantages over the others. “We can build something of the scale we’re talking about without a lot of disruption, without creating a great deal of traffic,” he said. “We think we can do it very quickly relative to inner-city projects. It gives us the ability to do something that has the look and feel of a true destination resort.

“Even though it might be a little bit farther if you’re coming from Boston, it might take you a lot less time to get in and out than someplace that’s in the city.”

The Milford project’s leadership team also includes Allan Kronberg as president and general manager. He is an experienced hand in the casino and hospitality industries, having served, among other posts, as regional general manager for Tropicana Entertainment and general manager of Treasure -Island Resort & Casino, according to Foxwoods.

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