

Residents sign petitions, file lawsuit in opposition to Central New York casino (video)

Written by Administrator
Thursday, 01 May 2014 23:55 -

Tyre, NY - Residents fighting a proposed casino in Seneca County say they hope a national anti-casino advocate speaking at Thursday's town meeting can persuade the board to oppose the project.

Casino Free Tyre is trying a number of tactics to stop a \$350 million casino, hotel and spa proposed by the [Wilmot Casino and Resort](#) .

The anti-casino group has a petition signed by 153 Tyre residents opposing the project.

It filed a lawsuit on April 10 seeking to overturn actions taken by the town to change local zoning laws to facilitate the casino's development.

The group has sent a DVD with music and video of birds to the National Audubon Society and bird groups around the country seeking their support to save natural habitat from casino development. (The casino wouldn't be far from the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge.)

And Thursday Les Bernal, the national director of Stop Predatory Gambling, is scheduled to speak to a community forum at the Gould Hotel in Seneca Falls about the casino project. He has also received permission to speak at the town board meeting at 7:30 p.m. at the Magee Volunteer Fire Department.

Casinos are a failed idea, Bernal said. "It's being driven by state governments desperate for revenue," he said.

Studies show that casinos prey on people addicted to gambling and exploit the middle and lower classes, Bernal said.

Although casino developers say that their projects create jobs and boost local economies,

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Bernal said studies show that to be untrue. Atlantic City has had casinos for 40 years yet the unemployment rate there is 18 percent and 30 percent of the citizens continue to live below the poverty line, he said.

[Wilmot](#) has estimated that its casino would employ 1,200 construction workers, and provide 1,800 permanent jobs with a \$50 million annual payroll. It proposed the project in December and last week submitted a \$1 million application fee to the New York State Gaming Commission to compete for a casino license for the Finger Lakes/Southern Tier Region.

Rochester businessman Thomas Wilmot has proposed building a \$350 casino and resort near Thruway exit 41 in the Seneca County town of Tyre. The project's website includes this rendering of what the casino would look like. Wilmorite Inc.

The town of Tyre is made up of mostly farmland and an Amish community sitting. It sits close to the Montezuma Wildlife Refuge, and residents say they like the town's rural character.

There are signs around town both for and against the development. Pro-casino signs point out the benefits to the economy in the form of more jobs and lower taxes. A pro-casino rally with people wearing vibrant green shirts was held in the nearby hamlet of Magee on April 17.

Residents who are opposed to the development list variety of reasons. They worry that the casino will destroy the town's rural character and are concerned about the amount of traffic the casino would attract on two-lane roads traveled by farm tractors and Amish buggies.

For example, the driveway for the complex would be across the street from an Amish dairy farmer who serves as the bishop to a 348-person congregation, residents said. The Amish fear the traffic drawn by the casino will make the roads unsafe for them, said Lynn Barbuto, of Chase Road. Barbuto said she speaks for her Amish neighbors who shy away from publicity.

Opponents worry that the casino will kill nearby small businesses, and polluting run off from big parking lots will flow into a creek that drains into the Montezuma Wildlife Refuge.

They also worry that taxes in the town that has no police force and a volunteer fire department will go up because Tyre will need to hire professionals to provide those services for the casino.

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"What's it going to foster? Pawn shops, houses of ill repute, drug dealers," said Richard Barner, 50, who lives nearby on Route 414. "We don't want any of that here."

Contact Charley Hannagan by voice or text at 315-470-2161, by email at channagan@syracuse.com, on Facebook at Neighbors West or on Twitter @charleypost.

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