

## Chemung takes cautious approach to casino funds

Written by Administrator  
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A roulette table on the new casino gaming floor at Tioga Downs on Friday. (Photo: ANDREW THAYER / Staff Photo)

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Chemung County officials have budgeted for a conservative increase in gambling revenues for 2017 as they await the benefits from two new casinos.

The county's 2017 budget includes \$1.32 million in gaming distributive earnings, an increase of about \$1.05 million from 2016's spending plan.

The increase comes from an anticipated influx from Tioga Downs in Nichols, which recently [opened](#) as a full-fledged casino, and del Lago Resort in Tyre, Seneca County, which touts a Feb. 1 opening date on its [website](#).

"In 2017, we start to receive the gaming tax revenue on the tables, poker, slots, those types of games of chance," budget director Steve Hoover told county legislators at a budget committee meeting last week. "We budgeted conservatively because we weren't sure when (Tioga Downs) was going to open up."

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Chemung County received \$251,293 in 2015 and \$267,327 in 2016 from gambling revenues, all from the Seneca Allegany casino in Salamanca, Cattaraugus County. Starting in 2017, the county also will begin seeing revenues from Tioga Downs and del Lago.

The revenues will be used to offset a decline of about \$2.5 million in sales tax collections from the prior year and relieve the burden of nearly \$38 million the county sends to the state for its share of mandated programs, County Executive Tom Santulli said Monday.

"I think it's going to be a good source of revenue, but how significant, I don't want to predict that," Santulli said. "For me, it's really wait and see."

Eighty percent of taxes the casinos pay on gaming revenues will go to the state for education and property tax reduction. Another 10 percent will be divided between the host municipality and county, with the remaining 10 percent to be divided among the other counties in the casino's region on a per-capita basis.

Chemung County also will receive a portion of the one-time license fees paid by both casinos. Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced in June that the county would receive \$489,532 from del Lago's license fee, and Hoover last week estimated the fee payment from Tioga Downs at between \$350,000 and \$400,000.

Officials budgeted conservatively based on recommendations from the New York State Association of Counties, said Hoover, who cautioned that new casinos won't necessarily translate to a drastic revenue increase.

"There's only so many gamblers in the region, and just because you have more casinos doesn't mean everyone's going to gamble more," he said. "We're probably going to lose money from the Seneca Nation casino because less people are going to be traveling out to Salamanca."

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