

PLAINS TWP. — Without \$3 million in funding each year from Mohegan Sun Pocono's casino, the township could not continue to operate, Commissioners Chairman Robert Sax said Friday.

Mohegan Sun Pocono recently agreed to continue paying \$3 million in local share assessment gaming revenue to Plains Twp. as the casino's host municipality, even though the state Supreme Court ruled unconstitutional the provision of the state Gaming Act requiring it.

The revenue allowed Plains Twp. to adopt a \$9.3 million balanced budget for 2017 with no tax increase and no cuts to essential services.

A top issue to be addressed at a meeting between state legislators and casino representatives Jan. 3 in Harrisburg will be the provision, struck down by the state's high court in September, that required casinos to pay tens of millions of dollars to their host communities for a decade.

Mr. Sax said he would like to see a flat rate established every year for being a host community for the casino.

"We couldn't continue to operate without getting that funding from the casino due to the amount of employees we have and the health insurance costs," Mr. Sax said of the township, which has about 60 employees. "We couldn't function without a tax increase. There wouldn't be any way to make up \$3 million."

While some casinos like Mohegan Sun Pocono have been willing to continue paying, state Sen. Kim Ward, R-Westmoreland County, said money also should flow to counties that don't host a casino.

Mr. Sax said as the host community, Plains Twp. provides police and emergency services to the casino at least once a day.

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Written by Administrator

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“I don’t understand why they (outlying communities) should have an equal share. It’s OK with them getting a percentage,” Mr. Sax said. “I’m for splitting money, but I think lawmakers in Harrisburg should really think about just providing the host community a set amount and outlying communities a set amount.”

The \$3 million Plains Twp. receives each year from the casino is about a third of its approximately \$9 million budget.

The funding has been used for emergency services — including adding police and firefighters, purchasing a \$1 million ladder truck and making infrastructure improvements — such as a curb and sidewalk project on West Carey Street, Mr. Sax said.

Recently, Plains Twp. purchased a \$400,000 firetruck pumper to replace a 20-year-old vehicle thanks to funds from the casino, Mr. Sax said.

Without that money, he said township officials wouldn’t be able to do some of those things and would have to search for grants.

An official from Mohegan Sun Pocono could not immediately be reached for comment Friday.

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