

Written by Administrator

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PORTLAND, Maine (AP) - Casino opponents are seeking a recount in last week's election in which Mainers approved the state's first casino with both table games and slot machines.

Petitions with more than 150 signatures were delivered Tuesday to the secretary of state's office in Augusta ahead of

the 5 p.m. deadline.

Voters on Nov. 2 approved a ballot question calling for a casino in the western Maine town of Oxford by fewer than 5,300 votes — a margin of less than 1 percentage point out of more than 556,000 votes, according to unofficial tallies.

"The margin was so close and so many people worked so hard for so long we felt obligated to all the supporters to make sure we did in fact lose it at the polls," said Scott Vlaun of Oxford Hills No on One, an anti-casino group. "It seems at that range there's plenty of room for error."

Rob Lally, one of the casino investors with Black Bear Entertainment LLC, said he's confident the vote will be upheld.

"I think with the numbers we've won by, it'll be very unlikely this will be overturned or changed," he said.

Black Bear Entertainment is proposing to build a \$165 million resort that will be built in phases and include a casino, a 200-room hotel, restaurants, convention space and a spa. The project will be located along Route 26, but the exact location hasn't been made public.

Maine now has one casino, Hollywood Slots in Bangor, which has 1,000 slot machines but is prohibited by law from having table games such as blackjack and craps.

Supporters of the project say it will provide jobs, jump-start the local economy and generate

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tens of millions of dollars in tax revenues each year. But critics maintain it will suck jobs out of the local economy while creating other problems, such as increased crime and gambling addiction.

Vlaun said the Oxford Hills No on One group is working with the CasinosNo! organization in the recount effort. A third casino opposition group, Citizens Against the Oxford Casino, said it is not seeking a recount.

Dennis Bailey of CasinosNo! said the recount request is a "precautionary" move just in case more ballots turn up or discrepancies are discovered in the vote counts.

At least 100 signatures have to be certified for the recount to move forward, said Secretary of State Matthew Dunlap.

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