

Gulfside Casino Partners plan \$250 million casino resort in Pope County

Written by Administrator
Friday, 28 December 2018 15:37 -

Rendering of proposed casino resort for Pope County (Photo courtesy: Gulfside Casino Partners)

POPE COUNTY, Ark. (KATV) —

Despite local voter opposition to casino expansion in Pope County, the Gulfside Casino Partnership announced plans to build a \$250 million casino resort after receiving a letter of support from outgoing Pope County Judge Jim Ed Gibson.

This comes after [Pope County Judge-elect Ben Cross said he didn't plan on issuing a letter of support](#) for any potential casino operators.

Cross issued a statement Friday, solidifying his stance on casino expansion in Pope County, calling Gibson's surprise move "appalling":

"It is with great discouragement and dismay to have learned of the actions of the current county judge in regards to the casino issue. To have a lame duck official act in total disregard to the express wishes of the residents of Pope County is appalling and a complete affront to our representative democracy. My stance has been, and continues to be, to oppose any casino operation in Pope County. This is in accordance with the overwhelming majority vote established by the November 6th general election of Pope County voters. Legal challenges aside, it is my responsibility to represent and respect the voter's decision of those who elected me to lead our county."

The constitutional amendment approved by the passage of Issue 4 requires as part of the process of applying to the Arkansas Racing Commission, interested casino operators obtain letters of support from county officials. However, [Pope County voters also passed a local option referendum](#), which aimed to block Pope County officials from issuing letters of support for casino operator applicants.

"We have been in discussions with local leaders since March," said Casey Castleberry, Gulfside's attorney. "The Arkansas Constitution clearly supersedes any local ordinance. This process is playing out as intended by Amendment 100."

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Gulfside, which also operates Island View Casino Resort in Mississippi, claimed its project would bring 1,500 new jobs to the area and generate millions in taxes.

The Pope County River Valley Casino is expected to open in 2020, pending regulatory approval.

Attempts by KATV to reach Gibson for comment on Friday were unsuccessful.

Read more <http://katv.com/news/local/gulfside-casino-partners-plan-250-million-casino-resort-in-pope-county>