

What's going on with the Tribal Winds casino proposal in East Windsor?

Written by Administrator
Friday, 03 January 2020 14:51 -

EAST WINDSOR, Conn. — The Mohegans and Mashantucket Pequots once said [Tribal Winds, envisioned as a competitor to the MGM Springfield casino](#), could be open in 2020.

Now 2020 is here, but the Tribal Winds location — the former Showcase Cinema off Interstate 91, 13 miles south of Springfield — is still a vacant lot.

The theater was demolished beginning with a civic ceremony in 2018 replete with commemorative gold-painted sledgehammers. But there seems to have been little public activity on the \$300 million to \$400 million project since then. [Its Facebook page](#) hasn't been updated in 11 months.

The only action appears to be in federal court, where MGM Resorts International is trying to overturn an approval from the U.S. Department of the Interior for the tribes to [establish the casino on land that isn't part of their reservations](#).

“I haven't heard from them in quite some time,” said Jason Bowsza, the newly elected first selectman for the town of East Windsor. “It's certainly interesting from my perspective. I took office six weeks ago and have not heard from them. In the run up to acquisition and demolition we heard regularly.”

Bowsza said the town and its legislative delegation in the Connecticut Statehouse have tried to set up meetings.

Andrew Doba, a spokesman employed by the tribes through their partnership, MMCT Venture LLC, responded to questions from The Republican with a written statement.

“We continue to make progress on Tribal Winds, including working with the state and federal government to get MGM's latest round of litigation dismissed,” Doba wrote. “We look forward to

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working with state leaders as we continue our effort to preserve Connecticut jobs and revenue.”



This April 2018 photo shows the proposed site of Tribal Winds casino in East Windsor. Nothing's been done to the site except the demolition shown here (Jim Kinney/ The Republican)

The tribes have said Tribal Winds will support 5,000 jobs from the start of construction through the grand opening, with at least 2,000 jobs for the building trades during construction and 2,000 permanent jobs at the facility once it's operational. The casino is also expected to support 1,000 indirect jobs at small business vendors, according to the tribes.

The East Windsor casino would total about 100,000 square feet of space. MGM Springfield's gambling floor alone totals 125,000 square feet, making it bigger than the whole of Tribal Winds.

The administration of President Donald J. Trump and his then-Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke initially refused to give Tribal Winds the go-ahead — [under pressure, the tribes claimed, from Nevada Republican lawmakers and from MGM](#). Permission was granted in March 2019 under threat of litigation and with a federal grand jury probing the matter.

MGM fought back, challenging the decision in federal court in Washington. The state of Connecticut and the tribes are now trying to stop the lawsuit.

Bridgeport is also trying to lure a casino, fostering competing proposals, including one from MGM.

All this is happening while the casino market in southern New England is showing signs of being oversaturated.

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Revenues are down at the tribes' existing casinos in southeastern Connecticut. Mohegan Sun's net revenue for its most recent fiscal year were \$992 million, down about 7% from the nearly \$1.1 billion it took in the previous fiscal year. Net revenue at Foxwoods Resort Casino were \$787.8 million, down 5% from \$828.9 million in fiscal 2018.

MGM Springfield brought in less than two-thirds of the \$418 million in gross gambling revenue executives told the state the casino would generate during its first year. The casino's gross gambling revenue was \$273.8 million from its opening on Aug. 24, 2018, through the end of August 2019.

MGM Springfield reported \$19.94 million in gross gambling revenue in November, its second worst month on record.

Encore Boston Harbor reported \$47.3 million in gross gambling revenue in November. Only October, when it collected \$45.8 million, was worse.

Read more <https://www.masslive.com/news/2020/01/whats-going-on-with-the-tribal-winds-casino-proposal-in-east-windsor.html>