

Plainridge Park becomes first Mass. casino to win license renewal

Written by Administrator

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The Massachusetts Gaming Commission on Wednesday voted to renew the license of the Plainridge Park Casino, the Plainville slots parlor, which five years ago was the first property to open under the state's expanded gambling law.

The unanimous decision extends Plainridge's license by five years and marks the first time that the commission has had to reauthorize a casino. The two larger casinos in the state, Encore Boston Harbor in Everett and MGM Springfield, opened later.

But Plainridge, which is also home to a harness racing track and a simulcast venue, will be moving forward without a key leader. The casino's owner, Penn National Gaming, announced on Wednesday that Lance George, who has been general manager of the property since before it opened, is leaving.

George will take over one of Penn's larger properties, the Argosy Casino Hotel and Spa near Kansas City, Mo. North Grounsell, who is an assistant general manager at one of the company's Colorado properties, will take the lead role at Plainridge in coming months, pending regulatory approvals.

In a statement, Jay Snowden, chief executive of Penn National Gaming, expressed appreciation for the commission's decision, which was expected.

"The Commission has set high standards for the integrity of gaming and racing in Massachusetts, and we pledge to continue to uphold these principles over the next five years and beyond," Snowden said.

Plainridge said it had 413 employees at the end of June, though many were on furlough amid a shutdown brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. More recently, Penn said it had cut ties with some of the workers who remained on furlough after the casino was allowed to reopen at reduced capacity.

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The relicensing decision followed a lengthy process including community meetings, a public hearing, and extensive discussion over several commission meetings.

"On behalf of my fellow commissioners, I would like to congratulate Plainridge Park Casino on the renewal of their license. This represents an important milestone for both PPC and the Commonwealth, as this is the first casino to be relicensed under the state's Expanded Gaming Act of 2011," Gaming Commission chairwoman Cathy Judd-Stein said in a statement.

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