

Johns: Sports betting ‘a must’ for LC casinos

Written by Administrator

Tuesday, 02 November 2021 06:07 -

Louisiana Gaming Control Board Chairman Ronnie Johns said Monday that he’s hoping to issue sports betting licenses to Golden Nugget Casino and L’Auberge Casino Resort in Lake Charles within the next week or so.

Temporary sports betting licenses went into effect Sunday at four Louisiana casinos — Harrah’s Casino in New Orleans, Boomtown Casino in Harvey, L’Auberge Casino in Baton Rouge and Horseshoe Casino in Bossier City. Nine applications are pending, including Golden Nugget, L’Auberge and Delta Downs. Because Delta Downs applied after Golden Nugget and L’Auberge, they are somewhat behind in getting its sports betting license finalized, Johns said.

Getting sports betting licenses issued at Lake Charles casinos is a must, given how important the market is for the state, Johns said.

“I can’t give an exact time frame, but we are very close,” he said. “I know it’s critically important to approve the Lake Charles market because it’s the No. 1 gaming market in the state in terms of revenue, surpassing the Shreveport/Bossier area. I know it’s a huge market, especially with Texas next door.”

Before Johns can issue a sports betting license, State Police must go through checkpoints on internal controls, the technology being used and how bets are taken and paid out. Once that is done, State Police make a recommendation to Johns for approval.

“I’m not going to roll out licenses on a daily basis; I’ll do them in batches once a week,” he said. “Possibly this week, if not next week, we’ll roll out a second batch of licenses for sports betting, with hopefully two of those coming to Lake Charles.”

Out of 20 eligible casino properties, seven, including the Horseshoe Casino Lake Charles, are expected to submit applications, Johns said. Formerly the Isle of Capri, the Horseshoe Casino is being rebuilt as a land-based property following the gaming control board’s approval in December 2019 to relocate its riverboat casino. The revamped facility is expected to open by the fall of 2022, according to officials with Caesars Entertainment.

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“That project is going extremely well, and we’re pleased with the progress they made,” Johns said. “They cannot open sports betting independently without having the casino open.”

The kickoff of sports betting Sunday was successful, Johns said, with more than 2,000 bets placed at Harrah’s Casino in New Orleans. Horseshoe Casino also opened sports betting Sunday, with L’Auberge Baton Rouge opening theirs Monday, and Boomtown expected to start at 4 p.m. Tuesday.

“There were no glitches (Sunday) at Harrah’s or Horseshoe,” he said. “That’s kind of an indication that we did it the right way and made sure they were ready to go.”

Sports betting licenses are being issued roughly two months ahead of the initial January 2022 goal set by the Legislature, Johns said. Meanwhile, mobile betting is a more complicated process and won’t likely be ready until January. The technology will allow users to have a mobile app that will work in the 55 parishes that voted for the referendums last year authorizing fantasy sports.

“For young people, they want to be able to bet on their phones and iPads,” he said. “They like the technology end of it. The real revenue is going to come primarily on mobile betting.”

The temporary sports betting licenses are good for six months, Johns said. Plans are being reviewed for permanent sports betting operations. Johns mentioned that Golden Nugget is closing its buffet area, and L’Auberge is closing the Jack Daniels Bar and Grill to accommodate sports betting at their properties.

“Issuing permanent licenses will be a much simpler process,” he said. “We’re looking for that to happen in mid-2022.”

The interest in sports betting has been incredible, Johns said.

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"We've been getting such a high level of calls in our Baton Rouge office from people wanting to know when we're getting started," he said. "I'm very pleased with how smooth things went Sunday. Hopefully, it will be the same industry-wide once we get everyone licensed."

Read more <https://www.americanpress.com/2021/11/02/johns-sports-betting-a-must-for-lc-casinos/>