

A special-use permit for a hotel-casino at the Legends at Sparks Marina shopping center was approved unanimously by the Sparks Planning Commission on Thursday, city spokesman Adam Mayberry wrote in an e-mail news release.

Olympia Gaming LLC's hotel-casino, dubbed the Legends

Bay, was part of the original plans for the shopping and entertainment project that sits next to Interstate 80 and opened in June 2009. But casino plans were on hold because of the recession, city officials said. Olympia, which operates the Casino Fandango in Carson City, does not have a starting date for construction, Mayberry wrote. The first phase of the project would call for a 201-room hotel and about a 64,000-square-foot casino and restaurant complex, according to Mayberry.

The total buildout would cost \$185 million and include a spa, 23,000-square-foot convention center, private beach, swimming pool, water show, amphitheater, parking garage and an 800-room hotel, according to city of Sparks documents.

Barring an objection, the next step is for the Sparks City Council to vote on the special-use permit, Sparks Mayor Geno Martini said.

Even though gaming revenues in the Reno-Sparks area have fallen because of the recession and tribal gaming in Northern California, the Legends remains an excellent spot for a new casino, said DeCourcy Graham, chief marketing and development officer for Olympia.

Graham and Dennis McGovern, the general manager of the Legends project, would not say Wednesday if financing for the hotel-

casino had been secured. But both agreed that the granting of the special-use permit could help close a deal.

"The special-use permit would allow them to have more definitive plans and then go out and secure final financing," McGovern said then. "This does not mean that all of the financing is in place. But they would know what has been approved and what can be built and how we define the value of the project to get financing."

Once the casino is built, Legends can proceed with restaurants planned for a boardwalk area next to the hotel-casino near the marina's shore, McGovern said.

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