

# MAIN LINE TIMES

Thursday, March 8, 2012

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## Editorial & Opinion

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### Letters to the Editor

#### Don't give up fight against City Ave. casino

TO THE EDITOR:

What are the chances of a casino for Lower Merion? Not permitted by zoning now or in the future on either the Lower Merion or Philadelphia side of City Avenue? Not a single person would support the use so not much to think about here?

Foxwoods lost its case in court, this December, to have its license restored for Philadelphia's second casino, which was to be in South Philadelphia. They put in an appeal to the State Supreme Court, but how easy it was for them to think up a valid argument might be indicated in that they missed the deadline for the appeal. The appeal was accepted anyway and we are waiting to find out if the PA Supreme Court will hear the case.

Kevin O'Toole, Executive Director of the State Gaming Control Board, said, regarding the Foxwoods license, "...should the revocation be upheld and final, the board must place the casino within Philadelphia, barring any amendment to the (PA State Gaming) Act by the General Assembly." The State Gaming Control Board has more power to place a casino than some people might think. There is a pre-emption clause in Pennsylvania law that allows state government bodies to overrule the decisions of local governments on issues like shale gas drilling or casinos. When, in March 2009, Philadelphia's city council dragged its feet on approving the foundation permit for the Sugar House Casino, the State Supreme Court appointed a special master, Judge John Herron, to directly conduct the approval of its permits and its placement. As soon as the master was appointed, the Sugar House Casino project went ahead without delay.

State Treasurer Rob McCord delivered a report by a study group this October, which pointed out that City Avenue is the most profitable place in Philadelphia to put a casino so a plan that puts the casino there will have the best chance of winning approval. Actually, it also wouldn't be too bad for Philadelphia since they would get to share a lot of the pain of the financial destruction of weak individuals and the neighborhood blight that casinos cause with that wealthy suburb next door, and the City of Philadelphia would get the 3-percent share of the casino's profits, which, if it's placed on City Avenue, are expected to amount to \$98 million a year.

Mr. O'Toole reassures us that if a casino operator's proposal comes up for the board's consideration to place a casino on City Avenue, we will have as much right as anyone

else to attend the hearing in Harrisburg and present our views on that casino. We may also write letters to the Gaming Control Board as soon as a hearing has been announced. You can check for hearings at its Web site, [www.gamingcontrolboard.pa.gov](http://www.gamingcontrolboard.pa.gov), and write to them at:

PA Gaming Control Board  
P.O. Box 69060  
Harrisburg, PA 17016-9060  
Attn: Board Secretary

There is also a way we can act now to ward off a casino. State Rep. Curt Schroder, (Chester, PA), who is the head of the House Gaming Oversight Committee, delivered House Bill 65 to the General Assembly for consideration last year. It is presently tabled but Representative Schroder asked the House Majority Leader's office to bring it up for resolution immediately after the Assembly reconvenes in mid-March. This bill is an amendment to the State Gaming Act that will allow casino operators anywhere in Pennsylvania to bid for Philadelphia's second casino license. Some lucky town near Reading or York or out in western Pennsylvania with even greater profit possibilities may get that casino instead of us. As Mr. O'Toole said about having to choose Philadelphia, "...barring any amendment to the Act by the General Assembly."

We have three state-assembly members whose districts lie in Lower Merion: Rep. Pam DeLissio, 215-482-8726, whose district includes Bala Cynwyd and Belmont Hills; Rep. Mike Gerber, 610-832-1679, whose district runs from Merion to Gladwyne; and Rep. Tim Briggs, 610-768-3135, whose district runs from Penn Wynne to Bryn Mawr. I hope you will call your representative and tell him or her that you think it is important to put that casino where it is wanted and ask him or her to vote "Yes" on House Bill 65 this spring. You can check to see how they voted at [www.legis.state.pa.us](http://www.legis.state.pa.us). Choose the "General Assembly" tab, then, under "Find," choose "Legislation." Then under "Bill Information" and under "By Bill" enter "HB65" in the second box and hit "Go." You will see the status of HB65. If it has been voted on then go one screen back to the "Session Information" screen and choose "Roll Call Votes." Find HB65 and click on the arrow after the date and time and you will see how the members of the House voted.

Please, let's not allow a casino to be built across the street from Lower Merion.

**JOHN BARRY**  
Bala Cynwyd