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The MICHIGAN GAMING Newsletter



FIREKEEPERS CASINO ANNOUNCES EXPANSION

On Tuesday, March 1, 2011, the Nottawasseppe Huron Band of the Potawatomi (Huron Band), owners of FireKeepers Casino in Battle Creek, Michigan, announced plans to expand its FireKeepers Casino facility. The project is expected to start this year with an expected completion in summer, 2012.

According to FireKeepers, the expansion will include a new 242 room resort-style hotel complete with an indoor pool, exercise facility, full service restaurant, and business center. The casino's new investment will also be spent on improving amenities such as the gaming space, entertainment and dining options.

"Opening FireKeepers Casino was a long journey for our Tribe. We are proud to see this business flourish and to have an opportunity to provide increased amenities to our guests. Our Tribal Elders and all 1,100 Tribal Members are proud of the economic engine that we have created in South Central Michigan," announced Homer A. Mandoka, Tribal Council Chairman of the Huron Band. "This expansion represents our commitment to giving back to our local community through job creation, increasing local tourism and truly turning Battle Creek into a destination within Michigan."

The expansion plan also includes a multi-purpose event center capable of seating over 2,000 guests in a concert venue. The space will also be able to accommodate banquets, corporate meetings, trade shows, and other events.

In addition, existing bingo operations will be expanded to 10,000 square feet of gaming space, thus doubling the current capacity from 250 players to 500 per session.

Currently, FireKeepers Casino features a 107,000 square foot gaming floor

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complete with a variety of lounges and five restaurants. It opened to the public in August of 2009 and includes more than 2,680 slot machines and 78 table games.

Located on Michigan Avenue near Exit 104 of I-94, just outside of Battle Creek, Michigan, the FireKeepers Casino project is owned by the Nottawaseppi Huron Band of Potawatomi Indians. The actual casino will be managed by Gaming Entertainment (Michigan), L.L.C., a joint venture between Las Vegas-based Full House Resorts Inc., and RAM Entertainment, L.L.C., a privately owned investment company.

NOTICE: MGCB PUBLIC MEETING CHANGE OF DATE

The Michigan Gaming Control Board (“MGCB”) recently announced that it will hold its regular public meeting for March, 2011 on Tuesday, March 29, 2011. The meeting was previously scheduled to be held on Tuesday, March 22, 2011.

The meeting is open to the public and questions, comments and suggestions from the public are welcome during the public comment portion of the meeting.

The MGCB meeting will take place at the Detroit Office Hearing Room, located at Cadillac Place, 3062 W. Grand Blvd., Suite L-700, Detroit, Michigan at 9:30 A.M. on March 29, 2011.

SAULT STE. MARIE TRIBE SEEKS ROMULUS CASINO

According to the official newspaper of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians (“Tribe”), the Tribe is actively seeking federal approval to build a casino in Romulus. The Tribe has partnered with Mike Sawruck, a Native American casino consultant who has helped tribes in Florida, Washington, and Kansas, as well as the Michigan-based Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians in Petoskey, to develop tribal gaming facilities.

The land that the Tribe is proposing to use for its

casino development is the subject of a land claim settlement between the Tribe and the state originally negotiated and executed in 2002 under then-Governor John Engler. This settlement centered around the Tribe’s claim to land in the Charlotte Beach area of the Upper Peninsula. The settlement acted to extinguish the Tribe’s rights to the Charlotte Beach land for land in other areas of the state, including land in Romulus. Though the settlement was negotiated between the Tribe and the state, the terms required Congressional approval of the language before taking effect. The Tribe was unable to receive this approval.

After failing to receive Congressional ratification of the 2002 settlement agreement, the Tribe negotiated and reached a similar land settlement claim in 2007 under then-Governor Jennifer Granholm. Similar to the prior agreement, this settlement agreement also requires Congressional approval before becoming effective.

The Tribe has reported that Mr. Sawruck will finance the effort to receive all necessary state and federal approvals for the development of a casino in Romulus. In exchange, Mr. Sawruck would receive 14 percent of the gross revenue of the new casino for seven years with the Tribe maintaining the option to buy out his share after two years. The agreement with Mr. Sawruck will require approval by the National Indian Gaming Commission.

CANADIAN GAMING INDUSTRY LOBBIES FOR REVISED SPORTS BETTING LAW

On Wednesday, March 9, 2011, the *Windsor Star* reported that gaming industry members, Ontario politicians, and local unions have been actively lobbying the country’s lawmakers to allow for expanded sports wagering throughout Canada.

Canada’s criminal code, a federal body of law, currently only allows for parlay-style sports wagering where a patron bets on multiple sporting events. “Head-to-head” or single game bets are prohibited, a restriction that the industry says prevents Canadian casinos from offering robust,

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Las Vegas-style sports books. Industry observers have noted that provincial governments and politicians have shown little opposition to expanding sports wagering and that pressure to amend the law would come primarily from the Windsor/Detroit market because of the opportunity to draw U.S. patrons into Canadian sports books.

Wagering on sporting events in the United States is governed at the federal level by the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act (“PASPA”). The law restricts sports wagering to states that offered sports wagering before August of 1990, which include only Nevada, Oregon, Delaware, and Montana. In addition, each of these states may only offer sports wagering to the extent that wagering was offered as of 1990. Because of these restrictions, only Nevada currently offers full-scale sports wagering. PASPA is currently under challenge in federal court after a New Jersey state senator filed a complaint alleging that the law favors certain states over others and, therefore, is in violation of the Constitution.

PURE MICHIGAN RECEIVES AN ADDITIONAL \$10M IN FUNDING

On Thursday, March 10, 2011, Governor Rick Snyder signed into law House Bill 4160 which acts to allocate an additional \$10 million for use by the Pure Michigan advertising campaign. The bill increases the total amount of funding for the 2011 Pure Michigan advertising campaign to \$25 Million.

House Bill 4160 received overwhelming support in both the Michigan House of Representatives (95-13) and Senate (35-1). Governor Snyder has publicly stated numerous times since his election that he is in support of increased funding for the Pure Michigan campaign in order to boost tourism dollars spent in the state. The increase in funding comes from money diverted from the state’s 21st Century Jobs Fund, a fund for the promotion of technology business in the state.

State tourism officials were initially budgeted \$5.4 million for advertising in 2011. By comparison, the Pure Michigan campaign was allotted \$10 million in 2010 and \$30 million in 2009. Thursday’s increase in funding will allow for

regional advertising for winter activities and nationwide advertising for spring and summer activities.

The Pure Michigan ad campaign has won several national awards since its launch in 2006 including the 2007 Best State Tourism Advertising Campaign from the U.S. Department of Tourism. According to studies conducted by Travel Michigan, the state agency responsible for the campaign, each dollar spent on the campaign results in \$2.94 in state taxes paid by out-of-state visitors.

MICHIGAN GAMING’S PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

MGM GRAND DETROIT NAMES VICE PRESIDENT OF HUMAN AFFAIRS

On Wednesday, March 9, 2011, MGM Grand Detroit announced that it has named Rozell Blanks as Vice President of Human Resources. Mr. Blanks will be responsible for overseeing MGM Grand Detroit’s labor and employee relations duties, training, employment, employee services, compensation, benefits, events, recognition and human resource compliance duties. He will also assist in developing and implementing the department’s strategic plan and administer its budget.

Mr. Blanks started with MGM Resorts International in 2006, serving as the Executive Director of Human Resources at MGM Grand Las Vegas. Prior to joining MGM Grand, he served for five years as Director of Human Resources for Encore Productions, also in Las Vegas.

“In the past five years, Rozell Blanks has served MGM Resorts International well and with great success,” said General Manager Steve Zanella. “We are happy to welcome him to Detroit and look forward to seeing what he will bring to the property.”

Mr. Blanks received a bachelor’s degree in Human Resources Management from Bellevue University in Nebraska and an Associate of Science in Training Management from the Community College of the Air Force.