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The MICHIGAN GAMING Newsletter



LITTLE RIVER BAND SUBMITS APPLICATION TO BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS FOR PROPOSED CASINO

On Tuesday, February 24, 2015, the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians (“LRBOI” or “Tribe”) announced that it has filed an application to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (“BIA”) regional office to take land into trust for a proposed casino and economic development project to be located on 60 acres of the former Great Lakes Downs racetrack site in Fruitport Township.

“This marks another step forward for the Band and the Muskegon region,” said Larry Romanelli, Ogema of the LRBOI. “For the past seven years, we have worked with the Muskegon region to bring viable economic development to both of our communities. This project would jumpstart the local economy and help provide support for expanded tribal government services for our tribal members.”

The LRBOI has entered into a Municipal Services Agreement with Muskegon County and Fruitport Township that includes the Tribe making payments for public safety, sanitary sewer and public water construction and services, as well as for the county court and jail system.

The casino and economic development project has received support from Fruitport Township, Muskegon County, multiple townships and local units of government, Fruitport Public Schools, West Michigan Trade Unions, the Muskegon Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce and local businesses including Lakes Mall. In June 2014, both Fruitport Township and Muskegon County reaffirmed their commitment for the Band’s Muskegon casino with resolutions of support.

According to the LRBOI, it would invest \$180 million to build a new casino

and economic development project. The project is expected to generate more than 1,200 new jobs in Muskegon County.

The Great Lakes Downs racetrack opened in 1999 and closed in 2007. The LRBOI purchased the property in 2008 with plans to build a casino and economic development project. As proposed, the project would include:

- Approximately 69,000 square feet of gaming floor space
- 1,700 slot machines
- 35 table games
- 220-room hotel
- Conference and meeting room space
- Dining and entertainment options

The LRBOI opened the Little River Casino Resort in 1999 in Manistee. For more information about the Tribe, visit <http://www.lrboi-nsn.gov/>.

MICHIGAN LOTTERY ANNOUNCES FIRST-EVER MILLION DOLLAR iLOTTERY WINNER

On February 24, 2015, the Michigan Lottery announced its first \$1 Million iLottery winner. Ms. Pam Rawson, of Grand Junction, is the first winner in the new iLottery platform, which debuted in September of 2014. Ms. Rawson won \$1 Million on a \$20 instant ticket.

“When I started playing I had \$15 in my online Lottery account and won \$150,” said Ms. Rawson. “That’s when I decided to give Diamond Payout a try. On my second \$20 ticket, I won \$1 million and I was flabbergasted.”

Ms. Rawson says she would like to buy a new home, pay off some bills, take a vacation, and invest in her and her husband’s retirement. “Albert and I are blessed to have won \$1 million, but plan to continue living our lives and serving our community the way we always have,” said Ms. Rawson. “This will just make us a little more comfortable.”

The Lottery currently offers players 15 different games ranging in price from 25 cents to \$20.

In addition to normal registration via the Internet, players may purchase an Online Game Card at Lottery retailers across the state for \$20. Each Online Game Card includes \$5 in free bonus play when redeemed online.

STATE AND DETROIT CASINOS PARTNER FOR MATCHMAKING SUMMIT

On April 30, 2015, Pure Michigan Business Connect will be hosting a “matchmaking summit specific to the gaming industry” at Ford Field in Detroit. This event will focus on networking and what is required to become licensed to work with the three Detroit Casino-Hotels. In addition to representatives from the casinos being present, members of the Michigan Gaming Control Board will provide crucial information on licensing, regulation, and other pertinent information.

In order to attend the summit, an application must be submitted by March 22, 2015. Those who apply will be notified if they’ve been selected to participate on or before April 10th. Applications must be submitted [here](#).

FIREKEEPERS NAMES NEW VP OF MARKETING

On Monday, February 23, 2015, FireKeepers Casino Hotel announced that Jim Wise has joined the FireKeepers Casino Hotel management team as the Vice President of Marketing. In this role, Mr. Wise will be responsible for developing, coordinating, implementing, and analyzing all aspects and activities of the department, including advertising, promotions, loyalty programs, special events, player development and database marketing.

Mr. Wise has more than over 25 years of experience in the gaming industry at both the property and corporate levels. Mr. Wise was most recently Chief Marketing and Communications Strategist at Magnum Integrated Marketing in Philadelphia, PA.

“We are enthusiastic to bring Jim into our FireKeepers culture,” stated R. Bruce Mckee, CEO of FireKeepers Casino Hotel. “Jim will play a central part in carrying on our goal to be the Casino of Choice in the Midwest.”

Wise’s gaming career includes four years as Senior Vice President of Marketing for Seneca Gaming Corporation, leading the marketing divisions for the company’s three gaming properties in Western New York. Prior to that, he hired, trained and led the marketing team for the Mohegan Sun at Pocono Downs in Wilkes-Barre, PA, as their Vice President of Marketing, along with three years as the Director of Corporate Communications for Argosy Casino in Alton, IL, and four years at Hollywood Casino in Dallas, TX as the Director of Corporate Marketing. He began his casino career with almost a decade in various marketing roles at the Sands and the Tropicana.

ROCK GAMING ACQUIRES INCREASED STAKE IN OHIO PROPERTIES

On Thursday, February 26, 2015, an Ohio-based subsidiary of Rock Gaming, LLC (“Rock”) became sole owner of its Ohio properties, located in Cleveland and Cincinnati, after it acquired a 20% interest held by Caesars Entertainment Corporation (“Caesars”). Rock also owns and operates Greektown Casino in Detroit.

While the specific details of the deal have not been disclosed, it has been reported that Caesars will remain the operator for the two properties and that the Caesars patron rewards program will remain in place. Although Caesars is currently in bankruptcy proceedings, the two Ohio properties are not included in the litigation.

Rock, chaired by Quicken Loans founder Dan Gilbert, also has ownership interests in casino properties or horse tracks in Ohio, Baltimore, and Kentucky.

INDIANA LEGISLATURE ADVANCES GAMING REFORM LEGISLATION

On Wednesday, February 25, 2015, The Indiana House of Representatives passed [House Bill 1540 \(“HB 1540”\)](#) by a vote of 76-19. The bill, if passed by the Senate and signed into law, would change the state’s gaming laws to allow Indiana casinos to be more competitive with other jurisdictions.

The version of HB 1540 that passed the House had several key amendments since it passed out of committee last week. In the previous version, the bill would have removed the casino admission’s tax, which provides funding to local governments, and required that each casino renegotiate its development agreement with its host community. In addition, the prior version would have required the Majestic Star in Gary, which currently holds two operators licenses, to relinquish one of the licenses if the property decided to move to a land-based facility.

The most recent version of HB 1540 that passed the House on Wednesday retains the admission’s tax, as well as directs the legislative council to study the effects of the admission’s tax and propose potential alternative methods of funding local government. Indiana casino operators have argued that the tax is outdated and difficult to calculate because the casinos are allowed to remain moored to their docks, allowing patrons to flow in and out of the property at will. In addition, the provision related to Majestic Star giving up one of its licenses should it move to land has been removed.

Notably, HB 1540 would also permit live table games at horse tracks. Currently, tracks may only offer slots and electronic gaming machines. This provision, however, may raise issues with Governor Mike Pence, who has been reported to oppose any expansion of gaming activity in the state.

The bill will now move to the Indiana Senate for consideration. For more information on HB 1540, please see Volume 21, Issue 6 of *The Michigan Gaming Newsletter*, available by [clicking here](#).