

Tiverton Casino Hotel allowed to remain a 24-hour operation

By Marcia Pobzeznik

Daily News staff writer

Posted Aug 28, 2019 at 8:37 AM

Updated Aug 28, 2019 at 9:28 AM

“It’s important from a competitive standpoint,” casino attorney Mark Russo told the Town Council.

TIVERTON — There were no objections at a public hearing Monday night on a request by Twin River to change the pilot 24-hour operating license at Tiverton Casino Hotel to a permanent one, but it still must be renewed yearly and would be subject to show-cause hearings if there are any perceived violations.

“It’s important from a competitive standpoint,” casino attorney Mark Russo told the Town Council.

The casino and hotel employ 600 people, Russo said, and “over 60” of them are Tiverton residents. Not all of the employees are full time.

A hearing recently on the first quarterly report to the town since the casino opened nearly a year ago highlighted an issue the heads of the police and fire departments in town said needed attention. Communications equipment must be upgraded to make it easier for safety personnel on the casino property to communicate with first responders outside the property. Russo said they are installing new cables and new equipment to solve that problem.

The casino, offering both table games and slot machines, opened a year ago with a license that was transferred from the former Newport Grand slots parlor. Sports betting was added in December.

Tiverton Casino Hotel was built on 21 acres of a 51-acre wooded and wetlands parcel at the intersection of William S. Canning Boulevard and Stafford Road, near the state line with Fall River, Massachusetts, and just off Route 24. A

roundabout was built near the entrance to the casino with funding from both the state and the casino.

Voters were split on whether a casino should be built in town. A 2016 statewide referendum vote needed local approval to pass, and it did by just 367 votes – 4,334 (52.2 percent) in favor to 3,967 (47.8 percent) against.

Residents were told the casino would help employ residents and ease the tax burden because the town is guaranteed at least \$3 million annually in gaming revenue, in addition to property taxes and meals and beverage taxes.

The only resident to speak at the public hearing on the license Monday night was Barbara Pelletier, who was a proponent of the proposed operation before the referendum vote.

“Thanks to the casino, for the first time in many years we’ve seen a tax reduction,” Pelletier said.

“They seem to know what they’re doing and they do it well,” she said.

Revenues for the first 10 months of the Tiverton casino operation did increase every quarter, but a major player in the casino arena, Encore, which opened outside of Boston in July, began operations after the last quarter earnings report was issued.

Patti Doyle, spokesperson for Twin River, which also operates the larger casino in Lincoln, reported there were layoffs because of the opening of Encore.

Encore recently started a shuttle service from Patriot Place in Foxboro, Massachusetts, to its location in Everett.

Tiverton Town Treasurer Denise Saurette said recently the town was still receiving \$4,000 to \$5,000 a week from table game revenue, with a few weeks over \$6000.

Quarterly revenue from video slot terminals, which is paid every three months, has increased each quarter to date. Revenue to the town from the 1,000 slot machines at the Tiverton casino was \$323,745 for the quarter ending Dec. 31,

2018; \$355,938 for the quarter ending March 31; and \$382,222 for the quarter ending June 30, Saurette reported. The next quarterly report and payment is due at the end of September.

mpobzeznik@NewportRI.com