

Broader vision needed

Thursday, June 8, 2017

Editor, Gettysburg Times,

I am writing, not just to oppose a casino in Adams County, but to encourage the Adams County Chamber of Commerce to broaden their vision for our area. Casinos are not profitable in the long term. Consider that The Economist and Business Insider (both 2010) - both show that Las Vegas revenue declined drastically, mostly due to the recession. After the recession, The Economist (7/18/15) reports things have improved, but not fully recovered. The key to the recovery was not gambling; the recovery was due to more to diversification. The tourism and hospitality industry diversified, as well as other economic sectors. We already have a good diversification in a tourism industry based on family, history, agriculture and leisure in Adams County and nearby Frederick County, MD. Do we want to endanger that with a casino that will discourage family tourism as well as those looking for a peaceful, rural getaway?

Also, while we want to encourage more revenue in our county coffers, US News and World Report (April 21, 2016) wrote saying Atlantic City was in serious trouble after gambling failed. Atlantic City's gambling demise also caused a steep decline in tax revenue. **If the task of the Chamber of Commerce is to bring more business into Adams County, especially businesses that bring needed well-paying, steady and dignified employment, why are we looking at a business that relies on low wage, part time labor? Megan Shreve in her article appearing on June 4, wrote that 'For a family of three to meet basic living expenses in Adams County ...it would take 3.6 minimum wage jobs.'** York and Lancaster Counties are seeing new businesses sprouting up, including light industry, laboratories for research and development, and other commercial enterprises.

It seems that when the Chamber of Commerce is endorsing a casino as an economic opportunity, they are going after low hanging fruit while the birds and squirrels are getting the good stuff at the top of the economy. A business park on that 750 acres at the intersection of US 15 and Emmitsburg Road? The idea has possibilities. Maybe the questions the Chamber of Commerce should be asking are 'Why is no one else in competition for the one other racing license? Is this a bad bet?' and 'Why are we not pursuing other possibilities?' And maybe we should be saying, "It's our turn for jobs," but **we'll hold out for real careers with real wages and real possibilities."**

Debby Luquette, Fairfield

Weigh casino's benefits

6/6/17

Editor, Gettysburg Times,

This is in regard to the proposed Mason Dixon Downs Casino, planned for the vicinity of Emmitsburg Road in Freedom Township.

Freedom Township has limited financial resources and utilizes the services of the Greenmount Volunteer Fire Department. It does not have its own police force. It should be noted that the fire department works tirelessly to boost funds for its operation to serve our residents.

Freedom Township manages its road maintenance through a few individuals serving the township.

It was stated at a recent Freedom Township meeting concerning the casino that Mason Dixon Downs would only be required by law to present less than \$119,000.00 a year to Freedom Township!!

I believe the casino is not the "golden egg" some folks believe it will be. It certainly will not be the "golden egg" for Freedom Township!

With a casino, we will then need a police force in place for Freedom Township. Will this be paid for by Freedom Township?

We may need to expand our fire services, expand our roadways and maintenance of roadways managed by Freedom Township. Will Freedom Township have the funds to cover this? I suspect we will need much more than our legal share of \$119,000.00 annually in operational services due to the casino.

Finally, Mason Dixon Downs has noted that they will not take land from any landowner through eminent domain. That is true. However, the increase in traffic, the need for more lanes on Emmitsburg Road, more lanes exiting Steinwehr Avenue will then cause PennDot to declare that eminent domain is a real possibility for those who live along Emmitsburg Road, of which I am one.

I simply ask that those who sit in the decision-making process concerning this issue, carefully weigh the benefits to Freedom Township over the voices of those who will not bear the brunt of this choice.

Donna C. Landsperger,
Fairfield

Opposed to Casino

6/5/17

Editor, Gettysburg Times

The casino would affect not only Gettysburg but the large surrounding areas. Most people who play in the casino do not win. Many people who play in casinos are welfare recipients who lose, then their family suffers, and the crime rate rises. Casinos can attract other undesirable things that would change the complexion of this beautiful, historical area. Think about it people, Mr. LeVan is concerned about his own pockets.

"A fool and his money are soon parted." Thomas Tusser.

No casino.

Don Gilbert, Fairfield

Avoid casino's glitz

Posted: Thursday, June 1, 2017

Editor, Gettysburg Times,

Adams County residents, did you happen to read David Frum's article in The Atlantic, "A Good Way to Wreck a Local Economy: Build Casinos."

Perhaps you did notice the statement in Realty Times declaring, "Housing prices with the construction of a casino can see a sharp drop almost immediately."

And maybe you did heed the WITF report of the experts testifying before Congress who "criticized the impacts that casino-style gambling activities inflict upon the criminal justice system, the social welfare, system, small businesses, and the economy."

The Guardian newspaper recently reported how slot machines are a "lose-lose" proposition. Studies by MIT Professor Natasha Schull reveal that the worst gambling scenario for losers comes from slots. And have you pondered Warren Buffett's counsel on how foolhardy it is to allow a casino in your community? (Google it.)

Don't be beguiled by the glitz and glamor and false promises. Research what really happens when you suffer from a casino nearby.

Charles Teague,
Gettysburg

Hold Off on Endorsements *Gettysburg Times 5/31/17*

David LeVan wants a 700-acre property at the Steinwehr Ave exit off Rt. 15 as the site of a harness racetrack, 1800-5000 slots casino, table games, multiple restaurants, a large hotel, conference center and spa. As in two previous attempts, Mr. LeVan is courting influential local groups and individuals for endorsements to be sent in with his application to the PA State Horse Racing Commission.

The Chamber of Commerce and ACEDC state, contrary to facts, that a large "racino" here will bring "good jobs" to Adams County. Last month 26 of 33 jobs offered at Penn National in Grantville were part-time, and salaries were minimum wage.

Research shows casinos typically weaken or eliminate nearby businesses, except for pawn shops and payday lenders. The National Association of Realtors have bad news for homeowners in their finding that casinos also hurt property values.

Worse for business outlooks, the racino at this main Southern entrance to Gettysburg changes our brand from a family friendly, historic tourist destination to a casino town. This brand change will alienate the customers of heritage and family tourist businesses.

Some pros complain about heritage tourist customers from across the state and nation weighing in through No Casino Gettysburg's online petition, now near 9000 names, 2/3 from PA. Yet they also complain about Freedom Township citizens standing up against this bad idea. The 2nd Class Township code allows a vote on horse race tracks, and citizens have met all legal criteria for the referendum, which we expect the Supervisors will approve at their June 14 meeting. On November 7, most Freedom registered voters will likely vote "yes" to ban the track, a choice that will kill this latest proposal.

Those who have been asked to endorse this venture might consider whether endorsement makes sense when our customers object and our voters in Freedom Township are working so hard to prevent this bad idea.

Susan Paddock
Chair, No Casino Gettysburg

Issue bigger than it seems

Posted: Wednesday, May 17, 2017 12:05 am

Editor, Gettysburg Times,

Observing from a distance, it's no surprise that David LeVan's obsessive quest for an Adams County gaming venue has encountered overwhelming opposition from Freedom Township residents.

The "casino-meister" appears unable to grasp the fact that racino opposition exists because of what it is, not what it isn't.

Why, when economic development opportunities much more compatible with the area's character do exist, is the vision for Adams County limited to gambling as the only viable option?

This most recent overture raises the term "one-trick pony" (pun intended) to a whole new level. Consider these factors: every piece of state gaming legislation throughout the U.S. includes language relating to abandoned children left in cars in casino parking lots: the Gaming Control Board hears of these cases in virtually every one of their deliberations dealing with enforcement. And what other business requires eleven PA state troopers on site to keep customers compliant and under control?

Upon entering the slots area at Hollywood-Grantville, one peers through the acrid cloud of cigarette smoke to find absolutely no evidence of the high-fiveing, well-dressed, energetic 30-somethings depicted in all those slick TV ads. What's more, the claim of "good jobs" rings hollow when the turnover rate at Hollywood remains excessively high. Finally, previous attempts to find an acceptable place to build a gambling venue in Adams County have both come to naught. Regarding this current third effort, the response to the real estate industry's mantra "location, location, location" is still "Nah, not so much." Truly, the issue is much bigger than that.

William Schneider, Mechanicsburg

Casino non-sustainable

Posted: Friday, May 19, 2017

Editor, Gettysburg Times,

Two points to consider before bringing horse racing and large scale casino gambling to Adams County.

First: According to an article in the Patriot-News Sept. 12, 2016, the only reason horse racing continues in Pennsylvania is because of state subsidies. In other words, Pennsylvania taxpayers pay to keep horse racing afloat in our state. This is also known as corporate welfare. The article states "Each year the state hands out roughly \$250 million in racetrack purses (prizes) to help boost Pennsylvania's economy and grow the industry but it's not working". In the face of unresolved issues such as the pension crisis for public school teachers, the trend to try to cut free school lunches for children who live in poverty, and increases in property taxes that are causing senior citizens to lose their homes, is this subsidy a good use of taxpayer money? Do we need this non-sustainable business in Adams County? What happens when the subsidies end? Who really benefits from gambling casinos?

Second: Thank you William Schneider for expressing some of the thoughts (May 17) many of us have long held about the obsession with bringing large scale gambling to Adams County. "Why, when economic development opportunities much more compatible with the area's character do exist, is the vision for Adams County limited to gambling as the only viable option?" It is my opinion that if David LeVan seeks to bring economic development that's good for Adams County, there are ways to do that which bring good paying jobs, enhance family life, and support the culture of Adams County.

Let's not gamble with Adams County. No casino near Gettysburg.

Rev. Sandra R Mackie,

Gettysburg

Bird's eye view

Posted: Wednesday, March 22, 2017 12:02 am

Editor, Gettysburg Times,

Freedom Township is targeted as future home for a horse racetrack/casino. Freedom Township is home to many who prefer to keep the focal point of our community rural and

agricultural. According to Freedom's comprehensive plan, "New development should recognize and preserve the township's natural and historic resources for present and future residents."

Adams County is blessed to have a beautiful natural resource called the "Southern Adams County Grasslands." This important bird area was designated in 1999 by Pennsylvania Audubon. Also called Freedom Township Grasslands, they provide crucial habitat for many declining grassland birds; some classified endangered and threatened by the Pennsylvania Game Commission. These grasslands are unique for abundance, variety and connectivity. The Game Commission lists these grasslands one of the best recreational birding spots in Pennsylvania.

I interviewed two avian residents in Freedom Township for their opinion:

Northern Harrier: "I fly low over grasslands in search of rodents. Identify me by my white rump patch at the base of my long tail. A rare breeder in the Pennsylvania, I love to visit the Freedom grasslands in the fall, winter and spring. Check me out on eBird.org; I've been spotted on Horner Road, the Mason Dixon Farm and Harney Road. Somebody snapped a photo of me flying. The Pennsylvania Game Commission classifies me a threatened species and devised a wildlife plan in case you want to help me survive. I vote 'Not in Freedom Township.'"

Bobolink: "I migrate 6,000 miles from Central South America to Freedom Township to set up house, raise young and continue my species. I stake out territory in the finest hayfields in Freedom Township. Hanging out in loose colonies we may have four females. The good news is we help to take care of our young. I sing the most beautiful series of ascending warbles with a territorial flight display slowly upward. Look me up on eBird.org from May to late July. I vote 'Not in Freedom Township.'"

Butterflies, dragonflies, foxes and other wildlife also live in the grasslands providing enjoyment with beauty, behavior and song, and help with pollination and control of insects and rodents.

Aldo Leopold says "We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect." - A Sand County Almanac, 1949.

I vote "Not in Freedom Township" .

Carole Simon, Freedom Township

Racino failure there can happen here

Gettysburg Times 1/2017

The reason a racetrack-casino license may be available is due to the failure of 12 years of efforts to bring a racino to Lawrence County, PA. Lawrence County is almost as large as Adams County. The racetrack was proposed in 2005, licensed in 2008, and the project had unanimous local support and no national opposition.

The New Castle News reported on 11/10/ 2010 that Mahoning Township was seeking a lobbyist to help the project along. "Mahoning Township Supervisor Gary Pezzuolo said... We were told the track would put out 350,000 gallons of sewage per day and to plan for that... The municipality has invested \$24 million on infrastructure improvements, including a \$13 million project to install sewer lines and build a wastewater treatment plant. Unless Lawrence Downs is built, though, Pezzuolo warned Mahoning Township will never recoup that investment...."

A series of funding problems meant that the casino project went through three different owners and six different investment groups. Casinos continued to be built and to operate nearby (as close as we are to the large casinos in Baltimore, Charlestown and Grantville.) The racinos have a legal minimum requirement of 1500 slots. Because of competition, the Lawrence County casino could never justify that 1500 slot level.

In July, 2016 the Pa Gaming Control Board killed the project. On 7/14/2016 the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review wrote in "Racino's collapse devastating to host township of Mahonin" that although state grants had paid for some of the infrastructure, the Township still owed \$10 million on that sewage treatment plant. The Township is so strapped it can't afford to pay for lines to hook up new customers. "We need some help," Pezzuolo said. "It's frustrating. The outcome is sad. It's a sin the way it played out."

Mahoning was counting on the \$10 million Local Share Assessment from the racino. Last year the Supreme Court ruled this provision unconstitutional. The law provided host communities would get the greater of \$10 million or 2%. The second option is still law, but 2% of a \$50 million a year casino is only a million dollars. Mahoning was going to lose even if the casino was built.

Gettysburg has gone through two casino battles. Neither proposal received a single vote from the PA Gaming Control Board. The second one was for a small, 600 slot casino. Given the competition, the PGCB didn't believe even that could succeed here. How can a 1500 to 5000 slots casino succeed? I hope that Adams County and Freedom Township won't invest time, money and hopes in one more unworkable proposal.

Susan Star Paddock

Commissioner Martin: Casino 'same wine, different bottle'

Posted: Saturday, January 14, 2017 5:46 pm

Editor, Gettysburg Times,

The recent announcement of the proposed Mason-Dixon Downs and its casino has been met with a variety of comments and positions. The position that I take has nothing to do with Mr. LeVan. I have much respect for Mr. LeVan and I supported his project to bring the Harley Davidson Dealership to Adams County. I also commend him for his sponsorship of numerous community fundraisers originating from the dealership. This business has been a definite boost to the local economy and community welfare. That is the model that I support, development that expands our local economy and strengthens our community welfare and its quality of life.

I am one that enjoys various forms of racing, especially the Triple Crown and sprint-car racing. So, I do not find racing to be objectionable. What I fundamentally object to is the gambling industry and the false hopes and prospects by which it captures those seeking quick financial gain. This picture is portrayed by the casino ads that run regionally. The ads only show winners, but the reality is that most everyone loses. The sad part is, many of the losers cannot overcome their financial losses. There have been several cases locally where a person holding public moneys used those revenues for gambling. They hoped to be winners, and pay back the coffers, but instead were big losers. Many felt the effects of those losses, not to mention the charges that the perpetrators face. The gambling industry does not present that picture; they only present the gambling addiction hot line.

The question is, can we justify economic development at the expense of destroying individuals and families financially. Our quest for economic development needs to be measured by more than expanding our economy. We must also consider the financial impact on those who are attracted to a false hope. Remember, much of the money they lose gambling also leaves the county; that certainly is not a positive economic impact.

As many of my campaign supporters from 2011 may recall, I did not support the proposed casino at that time. My position has not changed because my values have not changed. Those values are based upon what I believe are God's principles. Until His principles change, I do not plan to change my position. I do not need to see any additional details; to me it is "the same wine in a different bottle."

As the future develops on the proposed Mason-Dixon Downs issue, I expect to hear more serious discussion as in the past. There will likely be disagreements as those I have already encountered. Whatever our positions are, may we be seen conducting ourselves in a respectful manner. Just as everyone has the freedom to offer their opinions, that freedom carries with it the responsibility of respect for others. As Gettysburg Times

reporter Jim Hale recently encouraged all sides of the issue, “Reach out; don’t lash out.”
When reaching out, do not forget to reach out to God for the right solution.

Jim Martin,

Adams County Commissioner