

## Pros, cons aired at hearing on casino proposals



*During casino hearings held at Lincoln Financial Field, Judy Cerrone, president of the Stadium Community Council, tells the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board that her group opposes any casino south of Oregon Avenue. ( MICHAEL S. WIRTZ / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER ). May 8, 2013.*

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Traffic's constant vibration, especially after sports events, has left her home near the stadium complex and those of her neighbors "crumbling," Judy Cerrone says, tearing up their foundations.

"We absolutely don't want a casino south of Oregon Avenue. We are prisoners of our homes," said Cerrone, president of Stadium Community Council, a civic group. She was among about 60 people who spoke Wednesday to the state Gaming Control Board about the possible effects of a second Philadelphia gambling hall.

"Packer Avenue has four I-76 east ramps and one west ramp," she said at the hearing in the Red Zone Lounge at Lincoln Financial Field. "We have car carriers and every truck has to pass our homes to get on I-76 west. The traffic never stops."

The sports complex is home to the Linc, Wells Fargo Center, Citizens Bank Park, and Xfinity Live. It is also where three applicants for the casino license propose to build.

Six groups are vying for the license, among them Las Vegas gaming mogul Steve Wynn, whose \$900 million Wynn Philadelphia is proposed for Fishtown; local developer Bart Blatstein, who plans a \$700 million project called the Provence at 400 N. Broad St. (former home of The Inquirer); and developer Ken Goldenberg and his Market East Associates L.P., who want to develop Market8, a \$500 million complex at Eighth and Market Streets.

Proposed at or near the sports complex are Live Casino & Hotel, a \$425 million venue at 900 Packer Ave. by Cordish Cos. of Baltimore and Greenwood Gaming & Entertainment Inc., which owns Parx in Bensalem; the \$428 million (up from \$367 million) Casino Revolution planned by tomato magnate Joseph Procacci and his PHL Local Gaming L.L.C. at Front Street and Pattison Avenue; and the \$480 million Hollywood Casino Philadelphia planned by Wyomissing, Pa.-based Penn National Gaming Inc. for 700 Packer Ave.

Jack Ferguson, chief executive of the Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau, told the board that he was not endorsing any project, but "that with the right mix of infrastructure, community engagement, and collaborative marketing, any one of these ... can be a win for Philadelphia and the region in terms of jobs and economic development."

Shawn Jalosinski, executive director of the Sports Complex Special Services District, saw it differently. Venues there host about 380 events each year and draw about eight million visitors, he said.

"A casino with just 3,000 slots could add an estimated 10 [million] to 11 million vehicle trips and more than triple the amount of traffic in the area," he said.

As at last month's hearings, many gave glowing reviews of their favorite proposals.

Several people spoke of Blatstein's character and track record in developing underperforming neighborhoods. Procacci, 86, was described as "an icon in the produce industry" - he supplies about 20 percent of the nation's tomatoes.

At least three projects got high marks for minority hiring.

"Ken Goldenberg and his team have worked to support and promote minority businesses," said Barry Whitney, an African American small-business owner who has worked with Goldenberg as a financial consultant.

City resident Jeff Smith spoke favorably about the high number of minority hires being promised at Live.

Walter Pelaez, head of Sobel, a Las Vegas company that supplies sheets and towels to casinos, flew in to tout Wynn.

"Minority businesses usually get the lower categories, but when a minority-owned business like ours gets a top category, it speaks miles of [Wynn's] business ethics and his team," Pelaez said. "I believe it will be the same impact he will have on the city of Philadelphia."

The hearing will continue from 9 a.m. to noon Thursday.

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