

12 Action News (WBNG ABC)

Town of Union officials support potential casino

By Julianne Peixoto

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Union, NY (WBNG Binghamton) A letter of support from the Town of Union will be submitted to the state with the Traditions at the Glen casino application, after board members voted to approve it Wednesday night.

The letter was approved by a 4-1 vote.

"The community needs something to rejuvenate it," said Traditions at the Glen owner Bill Walsh. "There's a high unemployment rate, there's a lot of businesses that are struggling. This is gonna bring people back into the community and hopefully re-energize it."

Before Wednesday night's meeting, dozens of Union residents gathered at the Endwell United Methodist Church for an event sponsored by the Save the Glen group.

The National Director of Stop Predatory Gambling Les Bernal was flown in from Washington D.C. to speak about the dangers of casinos in communities.

"How could it work?" asked Bernal. "This is a wealth transfer. There's no wealth creation when people lose their money at a casino. The only people who win when there's a casino, are the people who own the casino."

Union board member Frank Bertoni says he thinks the majority of the public would support having a casino in their community.

"From all the data we looked at there was an overwhelming majority, I think it was 70 percent to 30 percent in favor for casinos in Broome County," said Bertoni. "So we feel this is millions and millions of dollars in revenue coming into the town, so we certainly have to at least listen and take both sides and analyze what they're saying."

Several residents voiced their opinions -- from support to opposition -- at the board meeting.

Residents who spoke out in protest used examples of gambling addiction, decreased property values and prostitution as reasons to oppose the casino.

Those who support the potential casino said it would bring much needed jobs and revenue to the area.

The host community of the new casino has to be willing to bring the casino into their community, so Wednesday's vote to approve the letter of support was crucial to Traditions' application.

Union is just one of the possible locations of the casino -- the other two candidates are in the towns of Tyre and Nichols.

The state is expected to make its decision on who will receive a casino license sometime this fall.