

THE BEACON-NEWS

North Aurora rejects video gambling

By Denise Linke For The Beacon-News June 22, 2012 5:42PM

NORTH AURORA (IL) — The Village Board has rejected a proposal to let local bars and restaurants offer video gaming machines.

Village President Dale Berman argued that the measure should be approved to support efforts by local legislators to plug the state's budget gap.

"The state is in dire financial straits. This is the way they've voted on to help fix that," Berman said. "I don't believe gambling is a way to solve all our problems, but I do believe in our local state representatives."

Theoretically, North Aurora itself could profit by allowing bars and restaurants to install video poker terminals, said Village Administrator Wes Kornowske. Each of the 12 village businesses that qualify for a state video gaming license could install a maximum of five terminals. For each terminal, the state would pay the village 5 percent of the state tax revenue that terminal generates, plus the village could charge a \$25 license fee per terminal and its 3 percent amusement tax. If all 12 businesses each installed five terminals, the village could reap a profit of \$135,000 to \$360,000 a year, Kornowske estimated. Even if businesses installed only half of the 60 potential terminals, the village's take would probably come to \$100,000 or more, he said.

But the social service costs of providing a new outlet for gambling addicts could cost the village more than the gaming terminals bring in — and not just in monetary terms, Trustee Laura Curtis argued.

"Studies show that for every dollar in gambling revenue, it costs taxpayers \$3 in social service costs," she said. "My concern is exposing children and people at risk of gambling addiction to gaming. There's a risk of damage to the social fabric of our community."

Villa Park resident Kathy Gilroy also spoke about the dangers of video gaming on behalf of Stop Predatory Gambling, a nationwide nonprofit group based in Washington, D.C.

"You don't find residents clamoring for these machines," she said. "In a couple of years you will find people clamoring to get rid of them because they lost everything to them. You hear that video gaming terminals are just like the state lottery — but people don't sit for hours in front of a Lotto machine feeding money into it."

One North Aurora tavern, the Little Red Schoolhouse, asked for a license last month to install video gaming terminals under the 2010 Illinois Gaming Act. The act legalizes video gaming

statewide under the control of the Illinois Gaming Commission, but allows municipalities to ban it within their city limits, said Village Attorney Kevin Drendel.