

## **Attleboro Sun Chronicle**

### **'This is our one shot'**

## **Plainville racino opponents to pressure selectmen to reject proposal**

BY MATT KAKLEY SUN CHRONICLE STAFF

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**PLAINVILLE** - Residents opposed to slot machines at Plainridge Racecourse will put pressure on selectmen to reject the proposal, their only chance at preventing the project.

Plainridge's proposal to add 1,250 slot machines at the Route 1 horse track was at the center of a Sunday afternoon open house held by No Plainville Racino, a citizen group that has sprung up in opposition to the project.

About 20 residents from Plainville and surrounding communities attended the session, held at the town's senior center, to hear from local activists and experts on the state's new expanded gaming law.

A portion of the program centered around a relatively unknown part of the law that allows for the board of selectmen to approve a racino agreement with the race track without putting the measure to a binding town-wide vote, which is required for a full casino license.

Mary-Ann Greanier, one of the lead organizers of No Plainville Racino, said that without an official vote on the proposal, it's up to residents to voice their opinions to their elected leaders.



*Les Bernal, the national executive director of Stop Predatory Gambling, spoke at an open house held by the group No Plainville Racino at the Plainville Senior Center, Sunday. (Staff photo by Tom Maguire)*

"It really has to come from a variety of people who are willing to put their names on things," she said.

John Ribeiro, a Winthrop resident and member of Neighbors of Suffolk Downs, spoke to the crowd about why he is fighting a proposal for a casino there, as well as for a statewide referendum to repeal of the expanded gaming law in 2014.

"There's not a single community in the state that is better for having a casino," Ribeiro said.

Ribeiro said casinos and racinos bring traffic and an increase in crime to their host communities, while also enticing residents to spend money that could be spent elsewhere.

"That's money that's not being spent in the local economy," he said. "Small businesses can't compete with the casino."

Les Bernal, national executive director of Stop Predatory Gambling, gave a PowerPoint presentation discussing what he sees as the link between legalized gambling and the government betting against its citizens.

Bernal said that for the government to make money through tax revenue, gamblers must lose at the gaming tables, which also benefits the casino owners.

"For the government to win, citizens must lose," he said. "We're betting against ourselves, while the billionaires and millionaires are becoming filthy rich."

Following the presentations, much of the conversation centered on how residents opposed to the proposal can stop the project without a binding vote.

Grenier urged the crowd to contact selectmen, speak to neighbors and write letters to the local newspapers to help spread their message.

"We have to put the pressure on now; we have to stand up now," she said. "This is our one shot."