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Discrimination Allegations Surface Against Group Planning To Build Casino In South Philly

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By Paul Kurtz

PHILADELPHIA (CBS) — The group that intends to build a hotel and casino in South Philadelphia gave an overview of its master plan to the city Planning Commission on Tuesday. But those plans were met with opposition and claims of racial discrimination.

The informational-only meeting featured artists renderings of the 18 story Live Casino Hotel that will rise above Packer Avenue and 10th Street, a few blocks north of Citizens Bank Park.

Plans include two thousand slots and [electronic](#) gaming tables, restaurants that can be accessed from the street and a multi-level parking garage to accommodate more than three thousand vehicles. Casino officials told the commission they were only required to provide 1,800 parking spaces, but decided to nearly double that number to alleviate concerns from nearby residents.

Perhaps the biggest concern of the meeting was raised by members of Al Sharpton's National Action [Network](#).

“Racial discrimination that has been indicated by 24 former employees regarding the former Cordish casinos,” said Paula Peebles, chairwoman of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the National Action Network, “their Live facilities in Louisville, Kentucky, in Kansas City, St. Louis, other places.”

Cordish CEO Zed Smith contends his company does not discriminate.

“We have six thousand employees, and we’re not in the business of discriminating against anyone,” Smith said. “This matter has been vetted by the Black Clergy here and the NAACP. They did a very exhaustive [study](#) of our history and our track record throughout the country, which we’re very proud of.”

The National Action Network plans to release a report of its findings in about ten days.

Also speaking in opposition of the casino was Paul Boni, a Philadelphia resident and board member of Stop Predatory Gambling, a national advocacy group. He claimed that casinos rely

heavily on people with gambling addictions and urged the commissioners to visit SugarHouse and Parx to see how they operate.

The next Planning Commission meeting on Live Casino Hotel is set for September 15th.