

Testimony

Kathy Dilonardo

Hearings on Councilman DiCicco's proposed amendments on casino zoning

February 21, 2007

City Council of Philadelphia

Madame President and members of City Council--

Thank you for the opportunity to speak at this hearing.

I am Kathy Dilonardo. I've lived in Queen Village 32 years. During that time I worked for the National Park Service at Independence National Historical Park and the Northeast Regional Office as Chief of Visitor Services, before retiring last year. My husband and I have a son who is a senior in high school.

I am a member of the Queen Village Neighbors Association Committee on Casinos and their Impacts. I have been doing a lot of reading on the effects of casinos---books, news articles, studies by universities (University of South Dakota, Iowa State, University of Illinois and the University of California) and reports by state governments (including Maryland, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Massachusetts)—unfortunately nothing I have read is at all positive—

No matter what I read, the numbers, the data, the conclusions were very similar, equally horrific and have far-reaching effects on our community.

Data from gambling communities across the country indicates that gambling fosters a significant increase in **crime**.

- A US News and World Report analysis found crime in casino communities to be 84% higher than the national average—and Philadelphia is already above the national average!

-228 members of Gamblers Anonymous out of 400 surveyed admitted to stealing in order to maintain their gambling habits. Those 228 collectively stole \$30 million!

-Court cases in the Mississippi county host to a large casino complex went from 689 a year to 11,100 5 years later. That is 17 times as many court cases!

-Police calls quadrupled in Ledyard, Connecticut (the town adjacent to Foxwoods)—from 4000 to 16, 700 5 years later.—4 times as many calls after Foxwoods opened! Imagine 4 times the calls already received by Philly PD. A lot of those increased calls and crime would take place in Queen Village, Pennsport and Society Hill.

Our concerns deepen when we read about the *unseen* but nevertheless real damage casinos will do to our communities.

Adolescent gambling increases dramatically.—Almost 2/3 of Atlantic City high school students (64%) had gambled in the city's casinos.

Suicide rates go up—Atlantic City found that abnormally high suicide levels for residents and visitors appeared only AFTER casinos were opened-- and Nevada has had the highest suicide rate for more than 10 years—both residents and visitors.

Bankruptcy rates have reached record levels in the country despite a relatively robust economy. State after state report that the counties in which casinos are located have the highest rates of bankruptcies in their states including Iowa, Tennessee, Maryland, California, New Jersey, etc, etc. The study “The Personal Bankruptcy Crisis which is related to no gambling interests whatsoever (pro or con) says that it now appears that *“gambling is the single fastest growing driver of bankruptcy.”*

Divorce rates, Child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, gambling addiction and job loss all increase in communities that have casinos.

After the casino arrived in Harrison County, MS **divorces** are up by 850 per year.

At Foxwoods in Connecticut, authorities have had to put up signs in the casino parking lots **warning parents** not to leave their children in cars unattended—what kind of parent needs a sign to remind them of that?

Before Foxwoods and a second casino opened in CT—the state had one **gambling addiction** center—since the 2 casinos opened, there has been a need to increase the number to 17!

And one last point about **jobs**. Casinos don't create new revenue. Their revenue is cannibalized from other businesses where the money would have been spent if a casino was not available. Gamblers spend 10% less on food, 25 % less on clothing.

The jobs casinos create are real—but one job figure casino companies don't advertise is that *for every 3 slot machines, we will lose 2 jobs* in the economy that hosts the casino. This is due to \$100,000 per year per slot machine that will not be used somewhere else in the economy.

And for every dollar of casino revenue going to the state, \$3.00 will be spent on social service needs created by the casino—the added addiction centers, court appointed lawyers, unemployment, welfare and counseling etc. That's \$2.00 more dollars the state has to find! All of the money the casinos give to the government in revenue cannot offset the tsunami of economic and human devastation their presence ignites in the community.

It is folly to think we are immune. We need for you to work together to find ways to keep casinos out of not only our neighborhood but all of Philadelphia's neighborhoods.

Thank you.

Sources:

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Adolescent gambling

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