

Testimony to Members of the Committee on Rules of the Council of the City of Philadelphia
Presented by Tania Rorke
February 21, 2007

My name is Tania Rorke and I am President of the Society Hill Civic Association, which is a founding member of the Delaware River Neighborhood Alliance. This past December, we learned that Sugar House and Foxwoods would each receive a license to operate slots in Philadelphia. Both casinos would be located along the Delaware River, Sugar House to our north and Foxwoods to our south. The precise mid-point is Spruce Street, in the heart of Society Hill, . Our Association does not oppose Gambling or casinos; however it does oppose putting them adjacent to highly residential neighborhoods. We are opposed to *both* sites identified by the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board.

We are also upset by the entire process that brought Gambling to Philadelphia. In 2004, over 4th of July weekend, Pennsylvania House Bill #2330, a 33-line bill on the subject of “background checks for people who work at race tracks”, was on its constitutionally mandated third hearing. The bill had been in the house for 47 days with no amendments. It had been in the Senate for 100 days with no amendments. However in the early morning hours, all 33 lines of House Bill 2330 were deleted and a revised bill with 144 pages of amendments established the means to bring gambling to Pennsylvania. This bill was passed with no public scrutiny, no public hearings and no public input. Pennsylvania became the only state to legalize gambling without a voter referendum. How could this happen? Is it so shocking to learn that from 1999 to 2002, nearly \$2 million dollars in campaign contributions were poured into Pennsylvania politics by gambling interests, or that over \$800,000 of those contributions went directly to the Rendell campaign? We are sickened.

We have set our sights on the Foxwoods site. Over the last few years, there has been a tremendous amount of development along the southern portion of Christopher Columbus Boulevard. The current roadway system is often unable to accommodate the present volume of traffic. Imagine adding 40,000 cars a day. Many of these cars will find their way onto our local residential streets. While Foxwoods has proposed improvements for the roadways to remedy the situation, a traffic consultant hired by our organization has found Foxwoods conclusions and remedies full of errors and omissions. This development and its impacts are terribly inconsistent

with the historic character of our communities. We also expect to see an increase in crime which will place serious burdens on our local police force, which is already stretched too thin.

Over 15 communities, stretching from Whitman to Port Richmond, representing over 200,000 residents, have united in opposition of the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board's decision to license two category II slot machine facilities along the Delaware River. Over 27,000 residents signed petitions in the hopes of putting a legally binding referendum on the May 15th primary ballot which would disallow the zoning of casinos within 1,500 feet of a neighborhood. We are hear to ask each and every member of city council – and the Mayor -- to help is in our battle to protect and preserve the quality of life in our neighborhoods that many have worked a lifetime to build. We hope you will stand with Councilman DiCicco in his efforts to promote community interests by supporting his legislative agenda. If Philadelphia is getting casinos – we ask that you demand an independent study to identify the best sites for gaming in the city. The City of Philadelphia has the power and should decide where to put these casinos.

Thank you.