

Casino, Pope County and Taxes

Doug Skelton, Jan 30, 2019

I gladly go on the record to advocate for a Casino Resort Hotel to be built in Pope County.

In general, a casino can either be a good thing or a bad thing in a community, it just depends on what is being offered. If the plan is to bring a casino similar to the casinos that join us to the West (metal buildings with a stucco facade) then I would help lead the opposition and fight against bringing a casino to Pope County. What is being proposed here, in Pope County, is a Casino Resort Hotel by Gulfside Casino Partnership which creates a destination venue and offers a four diamond quality resort, fine dining, amphitheater for a music venue, gaming, pools and spas, millions in local tax revenue, \$20 million dollar foundation for children who attend schools in Pope County, 1,000 plus good jobs with benefits, use of local workforce and vendors, all resulting from a \$254 million dollar investment in this community and this doesn't include the additional retail shopping and restaurants that will develop around the resort.

Pope County, the City of Russellville and our local School Districts are all in need of tax revenue. The following list provides a few pending projects where locally elected officials discussed the need of a sales and/or property tax increase:

1. New Detention Center. Answer: Increase taxes on the people of Pope County;
2. New Road Department and EMS. Answer: Increase taxes on the people of Pope County;
3. Funding for deteriorating Pope County equipment and infrastructure. Answer: Increase taxes on the people of Pope County;
4. Funding for Water Park. Answer: Increase taxes on the people of Russellville;
5. Funding for new Baseball Complex. Answer: Increase taxes on the people of Russellville; and
6. Much needed funding for School Districts. Answer: Increase taxes on the people of Pope County;

Option Two (Our solution to generate funds):

1. New Detention Center. Answer: Gulfside Casino Partnership tax revenue;
2. New Road Department and EMS. Answer: Gulfside Casino Partnership tax revenue;
3. Funding for deteriorating county equipment and infrastructure. Answer: Gulfside Casino Partnership tax revenue;
4. Funding for Water Park. Answer: Gulfside Casino Partnership tax revenue;

5. Funding for new Baseball Complex. Answer: Gulfside Casino Partnership tax revenue; and
6. Much needed money for School Districts. Answer: Gulfside Casino Partnership; or

Option Three:

1. Do nothing. Continue to marginalize our local workforce, stagnate growth and tax revenue for local government.

If the people of Pope County don't take advantage of Gulfside Casino Partnership's proposal or a better proposal from another casino operator, this loss will go down as the greatest economic BLUNDER in the history of Pope County and the City of Russellville.

Some of our local residents remember the opposition to Arkansas Nuclear One coming to Pope County 50 years ago, the opposition to Arkansas Nuclear One was much more formidable than the opposition to the Casino. Today we ask ourselves, "How will our community survive when Arkansas Nuclear One decommissions in the not so distant future?" Local tax revenue will plummet and besides Gulfside Casino Partnership's proposal, there is nothing on the horizon to replace the loss of Arkansas Nuclear One's impact on our local economy. Your locally elected officials have no plan to make up for the lost opportunity in tax benefits, except to increase your taxes.

Doug Skelton