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SERVING PALMER, MONSON, BRIMFIELD, HOLLAND & WALES

It's three of a kind for Monson

Three abutter's agreements possible

By Emily Thurlow
Staff Writer

MONSON – Ever since the casino gaming legislation first passed, a number of communities throughout the Commonwealth have been doing their research through local study committees to see how their existing infrastructure and quality of life would be affected if a casino were to come to their specific towns, or nearby. And during

Monson select board's most recent meeting, Chairman Edward Harrison of the Western Massachusetts Casino Task Force came before the board to explain the legislation and why the town may have to create three Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreements.

"In our case, it's one per applicant, so if it's Mohegan Sun doing one, and somebody else doing one in Brimfield and say

another comes from Warren, for which we all may be a surrounding community, we may have to have three different Memorandum of Understanding agreements," said Harrison.

The MOU agreements are required of the applicants as described in the legislation to "set forth the conditions to have the gaming establishment located in proximity to surrounding communities and documentation of public outreach

to those surrounding communities provided however the agreement shall include a gaming impact fee for surrounding communities and all stipulations for responsibilities for surrounding communities and the applicant." But one thing that Harrison did emphasize was the need to try and negotiate an agreement with an applicant, because if they can't come to an agreement with an applicant, then the Massachusetts Gaming Commission – which he expects to be identified by March – will determine what the conditions will be.

"So basically what they're saying so boldly is 'work it out,' or

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"So basically what they're saying so boldly is 'work it out,' or 'work out what you get.'"

John Goodrich II
Select board member

Slot to be filled

Potential casino review primary goal

By Emily Thurlow
Staff Writer

BRIMFIELD – The town of Brimfield may become a host to a casino, an abutter to another host or be missed completely when the Massachusetts Gaming Commission releases a casino license in Western Massachusetts – only one was accommodated in the casino legislation passed last fall. But regardless of the ultimate outcome, Brimfield officials want to be ready for the potential positive and negative impacts.

And at the most recent select board meeting for the town, the board interviewed two consultant candidates that they said will have to "double down" by helping to draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreements with Brimfield as a host and as an abutter.

"We want to know what we don't know," said board member Thomas Marino.

The town's counsel, Kopelman & Paige helped provide the names of three potential candidates that the board could consider.

The first contender to be interviewed was David W. Schweid of

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Casino task force shifting gears

By Douglas Farmer
Staff Writer

Members of the Western Massachusetts Casino Task Force may have failed to persuade legislators to consider an independent cost-benefit analysis of the legalization of casinos or held communities harmless in how such projects would affect local aid in letters prior to the passage of gambling legislation last fall. But the few members gathered at the makeshift Monson Town Office Building at Hillside School last week said they believed they still had an important role in helping their communities move forward as casino licenses are considered by the state.

Proposed destination casinos have been unveiled in Palmer and Brimfield, courtesy of the Mohegan Tribal Gaming Authority and MGM Resorts International, respectively, but the Massachusetts Gaming Commission will be tasked with sifting through numerous gaming license applications in

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Turley Publications photo courtesy of Peter Camyre

SOARING THROUGH THE SCENERY...

PALMER – Wilbraham resident Peter Camyre (formerly of Palmer) recently captured a seagull's flight at Forest Lake in Palmer on Jan. 29. Have your own nature photos to share? Email them to Editor Douglas Farmer at dfarmer@turley.com or call 413-283-8393.

MGM bets on 'green' support

By Emily Thurlow
Staff Writer

BRIMFIELD – After David Calahan, head of Palmer Paving Corp. announced his development partner, MGM Resorts International, which operates a portfolio of destination resort brands in Las Vegas, including Bellagio, The Mirage and Mandalay Bay, that entity announced this week that they had selected Gensler as the architectural firm that will oversee the design of the 'Rolling Hills Resort' project in Brimfield.

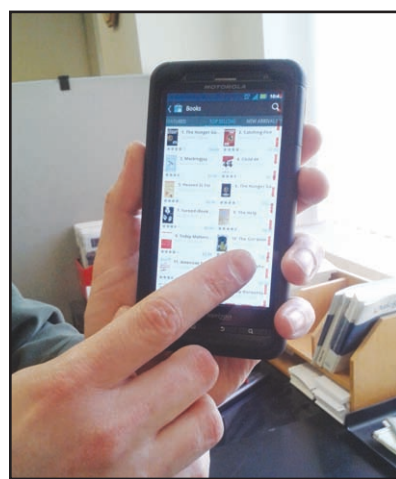
According to MGM Chairman and CEO Jim Murren, choosing Gensler – a global architecture, design, planning and consulting firm – was because of their "deep roots in green building" and their "commitment to sustainability" that made the firm the ideal design partner.

"We don't believe development should come at the cost of natural beauty," he said. "Gensler is a company that shares our green values and we are proud to have them joining our Brimfield team."

In the past, MGM has worked with Gensler on MGM's CityCenter in Las Vegas. This development opened in 2009 with six LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design)

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Answering technology's call



Turley Publications staff photo by Emily Thurlow

The Chamber is coordinating classes that will help local businesspeople and residents make the most of their mobile devices.

QHCC offers classes on smartphones

By Emily Thurlow
Staff Writer

PALMER – With technology constantly outdoing itself with the "newest" and "latest and greatest" versions released frequently, consumers can feel pressured to purchase the most updated models. And in the rush to keep up, many owners and/or operators of smartphones aren't aware of all of the things that their phones are capable of.

So, to better educate business owners and residents, Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce (QHCC) President Lenny Weake has partnered with AT&T Springfield and A Wireless Solution in Palmer to provide a curriculum of classes related

to smartphones.

"We want to educate people on how to maximize the usage of their phones in a way that will benefit their day-to-day daily lives," he said.

Weake said that he initially started researching this when he noticed a number of business owners that had smartphones, but weren't taking advantage of all of the capabilities that the devices have.

"We're helped through purchasing these devices, but after we purchase them, we aren't educated on how to use them properly," he said.

For AT&T users, a class will be held on Tuesday, Feb. 7 from 3 to 4 p.m. at the QHCC office on 3 Converse St., Suite 103 in Palmer. This class will touch on different ways to utilize a smartphone to increase productivity for business owners.

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Report serves up state's vision

Local leaders now digesting plan

By Douglas Farmer
Staff Writer

Describing an environment in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that has encouraged innovation within certain industries as well as major improvements in infrastructure but has also contributed to uncertainty regarding regulations and taxes as well as education and income inequality, the state's Economic Development Planning Council submitted its report to the Legislature last month. The 34-member council was chaired by Secretary of Housing and Economic Development Greg Bialecki and

included leaders from organizations as diverse as the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, Verizon New England, Tufts Medical Center, Hoppe Technologies, inc. and a variety of high-ranking state officials.

"When you talk to business-people about what they want, they talk mostly about predictability in the business climate in Massachusetts."

Greg Bialecki
Secretary of Housing and Economic Development

The plan highlighted what the group regarded as major accomplishments in the last few years, including the successful competi-

tion for federal "Race to the Top" education funds and the creation of "Innovation Schools" that allow for flexible and creative curriculum; the establishment of the MA Growth Capital Corporation to expand access to capital for small businesses in the state; the identification of priority development sites across the state as well as structural upgrades and acquisition of CSX right-of-way to improve select rail service; the disapproval of large health insurance premium increases; and the construction of the Holyoke Green High Performance Computing Center.

But the document – available online at www.mass.gov/hed – also outlined challenges in the years ahead, such as the need to enhance workforce development in line with

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