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Off-track betting proposal off and running in Green Oaks



Post Time Sports Bar and Grille LLC will operate the facility in the building currently occupied by Fatman Bowl, 13860 Rockland Road.

Paul Valade | Staff Photographer, 2016



Mick Zawislak

Plans for a sports bar and off-track betting facility at Fatman Bowl in Green Oaks are off and running after village board approval.

Trustees on June 22 overruled a plan commission recommendation on the proposal, paving the way for the sale and renovation of the 12-lane bowl at 13860 Rockland Road.

Attorney Vince Palmieri said he was working on the closing documents for the building purchase, scheduled for Wednesday, with design and other work to follow soon.

"We'll be open by football season," Palmieri said. What part of the season is to be determined but the fast-track hope was for 90 days.

"It probably will be longer," he said. "When you're remodeling, you never know what you'll find until you tear the wall open. I've been disappointed before."

Palmieri represents and is an investor in Post Time Sports Bar and Grille LLC, which would run an upscale bar/restaurant under an agreement with Arlington International Racecourse. Arlington would conduct the off-track wagering.

The plan commission held a public hearing May 11 on Post Time's proposal to add off-track betting to a list of permitted uses in the village's zoning code. It was continued to June 8, when commissioners voted 5-2 to send an unfavorable recommendation to the village board, according to a record of the proceeding.

Commissioners determined other gambling opportunities, including lottery tickets and video gaming, are available in town and there may not be a demand for an off-track betting facility. Public concerns included traffic along Rockland (Route 176), need for additional law enforcement as the village doesn't have a police department and, the image the facility could project on Green Oaks.

Favorable letters and emails were received from mayors and police chiefs in Orland Hills, Hodgkins and McHenry, where off-track facilities are located.

Palmieri said a traffic study showed the facility would generate no more traffic than a typical sit-down restaurant and the peaks would be outside rush hours.

The traffic study and a promise of a \$500,000 investment in a building in foreclosure swayed trustees. The vote was 4-1 in favor, with one trustee absent.

"I think the board just kept an open mind and were comfortable with the people involved and the character it will have," said Mayor Bernard Wysocki, who doesn't vote on matters before the board.

Palmieri said the bowling alley portion of the 14,500-square-foot building will be converted to semiprivate cubicles equipped with small screens to allow bettors to watch and wager on horse races.

Arlington has 14 off-track betting licenses available under state law and operates at 10 locations. The business is regulated by the Illinois Racing Board. A portion of wagers -- an estimated \$100,000 to \$200,000 -- would go to Green Oaks, which has limited commercial development and no village property tax.

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