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## County Commission approves rezoning in Coyote Springs for hotel-casino

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Clark County Commissioners today approved by a 5-to-1 margin rezoning 125 acres in the Coyote Springs community to allow a hotel-casino.

Former Sen. Richard Bryan, who represented developer Harvey Whittemore at the hearing, told the commissioners the request was being made now before home lots have even been sold to limit conflicts with future homeowners.

"Instead of putting this board in a position of having to referee what that understanding was it seems to us to make a lot of sense before any of the lots are sold that the nature of the gaming enterprise is established," Bryan said.

The 43,000-acre community, located 55 miles north of Las Vegas along U.S. Highway 93, only has a Jack Nicklaus-signature golf course which opened in May and some basic roads.

Whittemore, who did not attend the hearing, said in a phone interview later that he plans to ask for "one or two" more gaming approvals on the Lincoln County side of the development in the next three years.

"What we wanted to do was avoid any issues as to what appropriate planning was," Whittemore said. "We felt it was appropriate to give our home buyers and everyone who is going to be purchasing homes out there a clear indication on where these gaming enterprise districts are going to be."

But don't expect the project to break ground anytime soon.

Whittemore said it would be three to five years before a decision would be made on who would build the casino, with construction starting possibly three years later.

Two of Whittemore's partners in Coyote Springs Investment, the developers of the community, are principals with Peppermill Casinos Inc., which owns hotel-casinos in Reno and West Wendover.

In addition to approving the new zoning, the commission OK'd general plans for a hotel-casino with a 200-foot tower, restaurants, spa, convention space and a live entertainment venue.

The facility would anchor a "town square" shopping district with access to and from the golf course, according to documents filed with the county.

The first home lots are scheduled to go on sale at the end of next year, Whittemore said, with home construction to begin in 2010.

An attorney for Pardee Homes, the lead homebuilder for Coyote Springs, told commissioners during the hearing it supports the zoning change.

The dissenting vote was from Commissioner Chris Giunchigliani, who said a casino was unnecessary for a community that was originally pitched as an enclave for retirees and people who want to be away from urban areas.

"I don't see the public purpose for creating a gaming district under state law," said Giunchigliani, expressing concern about traffic that could be drawn to the area.

Whittemore said Coyote Springs is "not a bedroom community or a suburb" but a city with entitlements for 49,000 residential units in Clark County and 110,000 in Lincoln County.

"Ultimately, we think there is going to be demand for these types of facilities," Whittemore said. "But it is clearly being done with the idea that we keep our options open and exercise really good advance planning."

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