

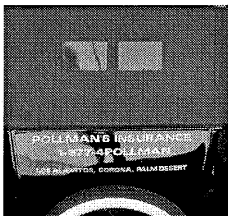


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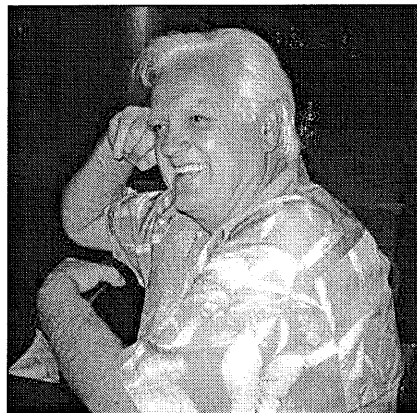
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Opinion / Not Mum: Morris Unleashed

Time To Consider Casino Gaming For Queen Mary Area Development

Publisher's introduction: From time to time, we get blazing phone calls from pioneering Pine Ave. entrepreneur, restaurateur and raconteur John Morris. We've invited him to put his thoughts in writing when he's so inclined. We have no idea how this will work out.

(August 11, 2006 [with email responses below updated Aug. 13]) -- It's time to consider the Queen Mary area -- that large, potentially lucrative across-the-bay development strip - - as suitable for casino-style gaming and the revenue it could bring.



City Hall needn't threaten Long Beach businesses and residents with a tax increase to pay for police and fire services. Casino-style gaming in the Queen Mary development area could help deliver that revenue.

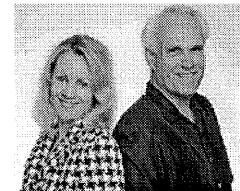
And it could bring other benefits. It's impolite to say "I told you so," but I did...and that entire area south of Ocean Blvd. needs the jump start I predicted it would years ago. (I'll have more to say about this in upcoming pieces.)

To me, the issue is adequate funding for public safety (police and fire). Doing that with revenue from gaming on the Queen Mary area development strip may or may not require easing some current Tideland revenue rules...but Long Beach has several Councilmembers now in the state legislature (and after November will likely have another) who could hopefully facilitate that if needed.

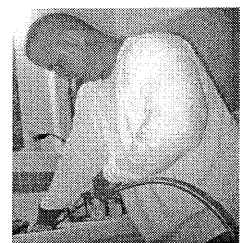
Would casino-style gaming corrupt LB City Hall? After laughing off the question, I can honestly say I don't know. But I do know it's not smart to rule out something on fear before seriously considering the facts.



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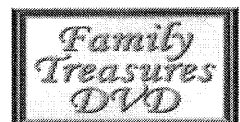
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Envision the following: a Queen Mary area entertainment zone teeming with visitors, producing revenue that the Aquarium + the Pike + the Queen Mary aren't producing now to help fund police and fire services and improve our beaches.

More about the rest of "Queensway Bay" later.

Your email

John has a point. However, can City Hall be trusted with more money? Right now they can't get the Queen Mary to cough up rent...

The idea of a 24 hour open door to the Queen Mary and the downtown area has definite revenue generation possibilities but would have to be closely monitored to avoid problems experienced elsewhere.

Public safety could have a designated part of the dollars coming in as well as having libraries open again and public works street and sidewalk projects being completed.

Watching the dollars means being more transparent...and then we could watch Long Beach turn the corner and become a great city.

Dan Pressburg
North Long Beach

John Morris is on the right track. I suggested this years ago and feel it is a worthwhile venue for the ship. Why should the Indian reservations have a monopoly on gaming? Those who cringe when hearing the word gambling are probably the same ones who drive to Vegas to do that very thing.

Jerry Shultz
Long Beach
Mr. Shultz was LB's 9th district Councilman from 1994-2002

Before giving the idea of casino-style gambling on the Queen Mary serious consideration, I believe a few matters need to be taken care of.

The current Queen Mary operator won't be the new operator. The new operator of the Queen Mary and its encompassing

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property should present a visionary plan that converts the ship to a high-end, Bellagio style casino. Long Beach deserves a component that exceeds Gardena's Normandie Casino.

And the new operator must be passive to annual audits conducted by the Long Beach City Auditor's office. A casino project for the Queen Mary is plausible but taxpayers should insist on strict standards so the public asset will be operated in the public interest.

Juan Pardell
San Francisco

All in this is a very good idea. This city has issues, budgetwise, that are not going to be rectified by tax increases or cuts in libraries, Parks & Rec., etc.

This is a viable and harmless way to deal with the wants and needs of this city's residents.

Les Robbins
East Long Beach
Mr. Robbins served as LB's 5th district Councilmember until 1998 (succeeding Ernie Kell who was elected Mayor in the late 1980s). He recently retired from the L.A. County Sheriff's Dept. and is now a regularly scheduled columnist for The Beachcomber and hosts "Mum's the Word" on Charter Cable channel 3.

Before we jump into casino gambling (something long fought by my ancestor Methodists who had a large hand in founding this town) as John Morris proposes, let's consider that it wasn't so long ago that Long Beach had adequate funding for its police and fire services, the budget items he hopes to provide for through gambling revenues.

Many of the years when police and fire were adequately funded, however, corresponded with the years when Pine Avenue was primarily bars and brothels. Come to think of it, the city did not have a structural deficit when Pine Avenue was bars and brothels.

Therefore, I propose a retrodevelopment for that area, instead of redevelopment (which seems to have cost us much).

Let's bring back the bars and brothels to Pine Avenue and we'll have plenty of funding for police and fire, without a deficit.

Scott Gray
Long Beach

The Queen Mary is a rusting heap of scrap. The only way to maintain its survival is to create a gambling casino. Profits from gambling could be poured into a non-profit foundation--similar to Dr. Moskowitz's casino in Hawaiian Gardens--to renovate the ship, subsidize museum, historical and educational programs, and staunch the oxidation of the rusting hull of scrap. The banquet facilities, restaurants, and Sunday Brunch can still be maintained on a for-profit basis.

Although I have had differences with Messrs. Morris, Deats, and Pressburg this proposal is a no-brainer.

Let the World Series of Poker begin--on the Queen Mary!

Douglas Frankenfeld
Long Beach

Gambling on and around the QM is a real bad idea. Any revenues raised for the city would quickly be wiped out cleaning up the graft created by it.

A REAL BAD IDEA!

Edd Tuttle
Mr. Tuttle represented LB's 8th Council district from 1979 to 1989. He's visiting Long Beach now, but plans to return in October with joint residency both here and Harrison, AR.

Gaming the answer?

A few real big issues need to be explored when considering this as a solution to what is the QM money pit.

First and foremost the civic leadership is just not in place to pilot this kind of a program with any measure of success. Just look back at 35+ years of downtown development. Sure it is better than the declining days of the Pike, but the "let's try this, then that" mindset, without forming a comprehensive plan has never been able to build a cohesive place for people to want to visit.

The last great hope for this was Disney, and what did the city

do with that? Then it was Pine Ave., then Queensway bay, let's build a Mall, let's tear it down and have a mix of housing and shopping, let's build a New Pike...Then let's build a oversized fish tank, " sure it will pay for its self " oops we need help ! And on and on

Why do other places have a better formula that seems to work , like Santa Monica, Universal City Walk, Downtown Disney, Vegas? Long range community planning and a urban zone that borders these areas, that provides a safe environment.

Get a few blocks away from Pine Ave. and you're smack dab in the middle of some tough blighted part of town. Shoreline Village and the QM are fairly isolated, sure relatively safe, but the distance between other areas is one of the reasons these venues have not flourished....

In its hey-day the Pike was all about a place for low cost family entertainment, a .15 cent hot dog, .10 rides, an place the off duty service personal could spend an evening. Why city leaders ever thought that this could be replaced with upper class dinning, swank shops, in far clusters is beyond most of us.

If you build nice streets, parking structures, fancy apartments, then have a Fun Zone/CPK (things that can be found in any place in SoCal) don't be shocked to find that people don't drive from Irvine to visit your New Pike area.

These are the same basic underpinnings and thinkers whomggggf;krigg;;fd;;d;;;;gp we should trust to charter a path to bring gaming to our Iowa by the Sea ? No thank you.

Developing gaming to be used as a city bail out for poor management is hardly a long term prudent solution. It's much like a diabetic who has a sudden drop in blood sugar, drinking a coke! You have averted the crisis, but your far from understanding and dealing with the problem.

Another thing to consider, putting all your eggs into a big basket is very rarely a good thing to do. Down turn in the economic future / major earthquake / 911 style local event / protracted or expanded war on terror / gas going to + \$ 5 a gal / etc.....all things that put a serious damper on the profitability of a gaming boat / hotel at the end of a freeway, that you get to by driving via a trucking route dodging goods from China going to every WalMart on the West Coast!

Need Police and fire money? \$ 35+ per container into Long Beach, let Wal-Mart, Kmart, Target, etc.... pay for it.

Frank Acevedo
Long Beach

Embracing gambling to build city / government coffers is not a new concept. Indian gaming is enriching municipalities throughout the US.

One might ask what the gambling saturation point might be in Southern California? Perhaps a marketing analysis and study is in order.

What element do we want to draw to Long Beach? Will the operator's vision be consistent with what we expect as a city - which leads to how the city promotes gambling, and where - as a high quality resort activity or a carnivalesque environment with burlesque, flashy, gaudy lights blazing on the water in the harbor, with huge neon or flashing signs along the I 710 and along Ocean Blvd and all major streets leading to downtown?

The I 710 is already pretty jam packed with visitors to and from downtown and port truck traffic, how much more traffic (air pollution and congestion) do we want to encourage?

Wonder what the results of an EIR might uncover?

Laurie C. Angel

It appears that gaming was an idea simultaneously sprouting all over the city. I was also one who proposed the concept to anyone who would listen and many who would not.

But, an idea should have a much stronger form than a simple "let's have poker on the Queen!" It takes much more than that. Let me offer my vision:

1. Get rid of the current management of the Queen...right now, right away. They have no business being there one minute longer than they have to.
2. Get a fully independent group to consider the proposals...not political cronies or anyone currently connected with City Hall...Do NOT get some private consulting firm! Locals only. We have the expertise right here.
3. Consider the vision: The Queen Mary and environs are separated from the city by water and freeways with limited access. It will help keep the influence of the casino at a

distance and it will be easier to police. It can be a separate entity that does not have to overwhelm the city.

4. Invite in a major player like Steve Wynn. He can build a luxury hotel and parking structure along with more casino space right in the QM parking area.

Suddenly, Long Beach has a major source of income, saves the 'beloved' Queen Mary, does not impact the downtown area, creates major tourism and a destination site. Oh yes, it also pays for massive improvements to police, fire, infrastructure and general quality of life.

The bottom line here is simple -- Stop wishing and take steps to make things happen. This city has been frozen in inaction to the point that when it finally makes decisions they are too little, too late, too outdated, too debated, and ultimately they fail or have little long term impact.

The Queen Mary was a scapegoat to try and get us all to forget a failed attempt to garner the World's Fair. Since then, we have floundered with this old ship and so many other half hearted ideas. Now there is a unique vision that only Long Beach and our rusting ship can provide. Grab the opportunity before it sinks into the sunset.

So, stop the debate and get going with this...

Scott Ringwelski
Long Beach

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