

Slots see 'considerable' interest from developers

By Aaron Cahall
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The chairman of the state commission that will decide where to place five slots parlors around the state and choose the companies to operate the facilities said there has been no shortage of interest from potential developers.

Proposals for the five facilities in Baltimore City, Anne Arundel, Cecil, and Worcester counties, and Rocky Gap State Park are due to the seven-member commission Feb. 2.

If the number and depth of questions are any indication, the state could have a number of proposals to sort through, commission Chairman Don Fry said this week.

"It seems that there's certainly considerable interest," Fry said. "But we will have to wait and see who will take that interest and is able to transition that into proposals and applications two weeks from now. It seems we will be receiving a fair number of replies."

More than 80 questions submit-

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- Commission Chairman **Don Fry**

ted to the commission at a session last week and in writing were answered in a series of releases on Saturday and Thursday. The inquiries ranged from minutiae such as whether the state or site operator would be responsible for chairs at the slot machines, to larger issues such as financial disclosure statements.

In its responses, the commission said it could award a license to a developer who still needed to resolve issues with local county zoning ordinances and laws, but could

not award that license and allow the operator to begin operations until it was in compliance.

Also this week, Hard Rock International said it had formed a partnership with Baltimore-based **Banks Contracting Co.** to bid on a slots license. Another Baltimore developer, the Cordish Co., separately confirmed that the two had reached out to them about forming a three-way venture.

Though Maryland slots have attracted interest from far beyond the state's borders, the deadline just over a week away will determine how serious that interest really is. State law requires a \$3 million application fee for every 500 machines a developer hopes to place at any of the facilities.

"That obviously is an important ante for anyone looking to participate in this process," Fry said. "We'll have to see if people are just interested and feeling their way through it or if they're willing to take the next step and make a financial commitment."

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