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The _____ MICHIGAN GAMING _____ Newsletter



GREEKTOWN CASINO SELECTS CASINO CONSULTING FIRM; OPENS INTERNATIONAL BUFFET

On Monday, Greektown Casino announced that it has selected The Fine Point Group (The Group), a Las Vegas-based gaming consulting firm, to help improve operations and boost profitability.

An engagement letter has been executed by both parties, subject to approvals by the Michigan Gaming Control Board and the U.S. Bankruptcy Court.

The Fine Point Group is well known for its expertise in strategic casino management, customer relationship marketing, loyalty program development, property turnarounds, and other aspects of casino operations.

The Group is led by Randall A. Fine and is comprised of several casino veterans. Upon regulatory approval, three members of The Fine Point Group will assume full decision making responsibility in interim roles as CEO, General Manager, and Vice President of Marketing for the casino, respectively.

“We are proud to have been chosen for this opportunity to partner with Greektown Casino, a property with tremendous potential in a city of history, pride, culture and economic importance,” said The Fine Point Group’s Managing Director Randall A. Fine. “We will work with all parties to improve the competitiveness and profitability of Greektown Casino and to position the property for far greater success.”

In addition, last month Greektown Casino opened its new 275-seat International Buffet which features a host of multicultural food which Greektown Casino officials refer to as fresh, “from scratch cooking.”

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"The International Buffet gives Greektown Casino-Hotel guests a culinary tour of the world with dishes made only from fresh ingredients offered at a moderate price point," said Bill Williams, Vice President of Guest Services of Greektown Casino-Hotel. "Because the International Buffet dishes are made from scratch, our guests will find food selections with a home-cooked, fresh taste."

Next month, Greektown Casino will complete its permanent casino complex by opening its new 400-room luxury hotel. The casino is currently accepting reservations and event bookings.

AGA ELECTS T.J. MATHEWS AS BOARD CHAIRMAN

At the December annual meeting of the American Gaming Association (AGA), the AGA board of directors elected Thomas J. (T.J.) Mathews as chairman of the AGA. Mathews previously served as vice chairman of the AGA board for the past two years and is replaced in that post by Keith Smith, chairman and CEO of Boyd Gaming Corporation.

"The current economic recession will pose great challenges for the gaming industry in the next two years, and I am confident that T.J. and Keith are the right men to steer the AGA through these difficult times," stated Frank Fahrenkopf, president and CEO of the AGA. "T.J. and Keith bring expertise in the manufacturing and operating sides of the industry, respectively, and will create an important and necessary balance that represents all AGA members."

Mathews succeeds Gary Loveman, chairman, CEO and president of Harrah's Entertainment. Loveman will remain a member of the AGA board.

The AGA also elected two new directors to the 2009 board. James J. Murren, chairman and CEO of MGM MIRAGE as well as Nick Khin, president and CEO of Aristocrat Technologies will replace seats previously held by former MGM MIRAGE chairman and CEO Terry Lanni and former Aristocrat president and CEO Tim Parrott.

Those re-elected to the AGA board of directors include: Daniel R. Lee, chairman and CEO of Pinnacle Entertainment, Inc., Gordon R. Kanofsky, CEO and vice chairman of Ameristar Casinos, Inc., and Larry Ruvo, senior managing partner of Southern Wine and Spirits of Nevada.

The other members of the AGA board are Peter Carlino, chairman and CEO of Penn National Gaming, Inc., Brian R. Gamache, president and CEO of WMS Gaming Inc., Richard Haddrill, president, CEO and director of Bally Technologies, Inc., Virginia McDowell, president and COO of Isle of Capri Casinos, Inc., and Stephen Wynn, chairman and CEO of Wynn Resorts, Ltd.

INTERVIEW WITH MATT HARKNESS, GENERAL MANAGER OF FOUR WINDS CASINO RESORT

Matt Harkness is the General Manager of the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians' Four Winds Casino Resort located in New Buffalo, Michigan. The Four Winds property boasts 130,000 square feet of gaming space, 3,000 slot machines and 110 table games, including poker.

Mr. Harkness met with *Michigan Gaming Newsletter* Editor Blaine DeGracia in December. To inquire about the interview, or if you would like to participate in future interviews please contact Mr. DeGracia online at info@michingaming.com.

Q: As General Manager of Four Winds Casino, what would you say is the #1 skill set that helped you achieve your position in the industry? How did you arrive there?

A: I began my career in gaming in 1979 as a Craps dealer at Resorts International in Atlantic City. I was also part of the opening team at the Golden Nugget in Atlantic City, which was owned at that time by Steve Wynn. I then worked for eight years at Playboy Hotel and Casino as a Supervisor, Manager and Director. From there, I went to Taj Mahal,

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working for the Trump organization for 15 years where I worked my way up through administrative positions in the table games department. Later, I moved to Trump Marina in Marketing Administration, and then back to the Taj Mahal as the senior vice president of marketing. After about 25 years in the industry, I had the opportunity to become the General Manager at Trump Plaza, a position I held for five years.

I was then presented with the exciting opportunity to open Four Winds Casino Resort as the General Manager, two and a half years ago. As far as what the #1 skill set that has helped me throughout my career, I would have to say the ability to listen. I believe that listening to the guests and the employees and taking action on the basis of their needs is essential to managing a casino resort.

Q: What enticed you to reach out into Tribal gaming sector?

A: The opportunities that Four Winds presented were very attractive. From the first time I saw the plans, it was clear the Four Winds was going to be a beautiful property. It was also an attractive choice since it is in a market which has the capacity to grow. Between the physical plant, the market, and the opportunity to work with the Pokagon Band and Lakes Entertainment this was a very easy choice.

Q: What is a skill set that you believe is most important in managing a casino and what advice can you lend to those beginning their evolution in the industry?

A: Again I would have to say that the number one skill set to possess in the gaming industry is the ability to listen. It's listening to the people you work with, as well as listening to the customers and also having the ability to understand specifically what they want. The same goes for the employees, if you stop listening, they will stop talking, thus you cut off a critical line of communication. The customer base that you have will inevitably possess different tastes than what you do and

the ability to listen and adapt is of utmost importance.

Q: What in particular has led to the success of Four Winds Casino and what type of advice can you lend to those in the industry given the economic downturn?

A: This is generally recognized as a market with growth opportunities and is one of the reasons why this property was able to open and generate the customer base and the excitement that it has. As far as giving advice, I think this is a time that a lot of businesses are being cautious. We all read the front page of the paper and understand what is happening economically, not just regionally, but globally.

Q: How has the Four Winds Casino property gone about helping the surrounding community in which it operates?

A: I am very proud of the fact that the owners of the property, the Pokagon Band of Pottawatomie Indians, have established a process where two percent of electronic gaming revenue goes to The Pokagon Fund. This is a great fund which allows charitable and non-profit organizations to apply for grants. Since November 2007, \$3.6 million in project funding has been infused into the local community which has benefited charitable and non-profit organizations positively. This is something that I not only as a person, but also as an employee of Four Winds, am very proud of being associated with. We have built bridges between us and the community and I believe that this is something in which we will continue to work on, as we strongly believe in being part of the surrounding community.

Q: What type of casino patron are you marketing your property toward and how are you going about accomplishing this?

A: It really depends on drive time. If you take a map and look at the radius around the property, it really gives you an idea of

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where the customers come from. One of the beauties of this property is that since it is land based, which gives us the ability to be everything to everyone. If you want retail, a type of slot machine, a great dining experience, etc. we can offer all these amenities. As a result, we are able to draw people not only from the surrounding three states, but even beyond that.

Q: What role have new technologies played in the success of Four Winds Casino?

A: One of the things we are able to offer, which our competitors in Indiana are not, are the wide area progressive slots, the million dollar/change your life jackpots. We have given out enormous amounts of money in these type of jackpots over the past year and a half. Specifically, since opening in August 2007, Four Winds has awarded \$3,255,120 in wide area progressive jackpots.

The W Club jackpots are also another amenity which we offer to our guests. These unique jackpots have three different tiers in which they continually progress, which makes a more exciting experience to potential customers. Since opening, more than \$2 million has been awarded in W Club jackpots alone.

Q: How successful has the casino's affiliation with the World Poker Tour been?

A: We are very happy to be affiliated with the World Poker Tour and to be home to the only regional World Poker Tour Poker Room. Before the property opened, we held focus groups in Chicago, Indiana and Michigan, and one of the things that people were very interested in was the World Poker Tour. It gives a level of credibility to the property and the poker room which other competitors can't match.

Q: Aside from the 6 percent and the 2 percent of slot revenue that goes to state and local government, what has the casino done to benefit, not only the Pokagon Band, but also the

surrounding community as a whole?

A: We have created many jobs, which seems to be more of an important issue now than ever. I think this is something which benefits the community greatly. We have around 2,000 employees working at the property, of which about 135 are Pokagon Tribal members, which I think is something that the Pokagon membership is proud of.