

Wind Creek Bethlehem: “Our expectation for this property is it will be the No. 1 resort destination in the Northeast” (4)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Serious Issues, Wind Creek Casino May 30, 2019

(4th in a series of posts on Wind Creek Bethlehem)

Jon Harris, “With state’s approval, Wind Creek Bethlehem plans to become ‘No. 1 resort destination in the Northeast’.” Morning Call, May 29, 2019.

- More than 14 months after the deal was announced, the \$1.3 billion sale of Sands Casino Resort Bethlehem to an affiliate of an Alabama Indian tribe is almost across the finish line.
- With state approval now in hand, the sale of arguably Pennsylvania’s most successful casino is expected to close as early as Friday, Wind Creek President and CEO Jay Dorris said.
- Wind Creek is planning a hotel and meeting space expansion, a \$90 million project that will take about two years to build a 276-room hotel along with another 42,000 square feet of meeting space.
- Then there’s the head-turner proposal for the No. 2 Machine Shop at the former Bethlehem Steel site. Wind Creek is planning to transform the crumbling structure into a 300,000-square-foot adventure and water park that also will include a roughly 400-room hotel.
- “Our expectation for this property is it will be the No. 1 resort destination in the Northeast,” Dorris told the board.
- With the hotel expansion, Wind Creek believes it will be able to unlock revenue and earnings potential by growing lodging,

meeting space and food-and-beverage offerings to meet existing demand. The Machine Shop redevelopment, meanwhile, offers diversification for revenue growth and could bring an estimated 1.4 million new site visits.

- Bethlehem Mayor Robert Donchez said he was pleased with what he heard from Wind Creek at the hearing: that it would develop family-friendly attractions to augment the gaming operation as it prepares to compete with gambling expansions in the Northeast. “They really emphasized that they were community-oriented and that they would be making investments that would bring jobs,” Donchez said. “That’s what they’ve told me from the beginning, and I’m encouraged that’s what they are continuing to say today.”
- Wind Creek, in its presentation, said the Sands Bethlehem management would be retained, including all nine members of the senior team, who are signed to three-year employment contracts that begin once the transaction closes. Wind Creek also plans to keep all of the facility’s 2,500 employees.