

Questions September 3, 2014

Q. Sometime last year you wrote about the Murphy Casino in your Q & A. Have you found out anything more about the effect the Casino might have on Union County and traffic?

A. Several people have asked me about this lately and a lot of information has been batted around. So out of concern and to try to get some accurate information I recently set up a meeting with several of the parties involved.

Q. Who attended your meeting to discuss the new Murphy Casino?

A. Myself, Mitch Griggs, Director of our Economic Development office, Mayor Jim Conley, Georgia Dept. of Transportation representative, Brent Cook, and then two members representing the new Harrah's Casino.

Q. What will be the name of the new casino?

A. It will be called the Harrah's Cherokee Valley River Casino in Murphy, NC.

Q. How many guest rooms will be available at the new Casino?

A. There will be constructed on site a 300 room hotel.

Q. What is the construction budget of the entire project?

A. The budget is for \$110 million dollars. That will consist of a 108,000 sq. ft. casino with 50 to 75 gaming tables and 1100 to 1200 slot machines all sitting on 35 acres.

Q. How many jobs will be available at the casino?

A. The estimated number of jobs will be between 800 and 900 with an annual payroll of between \$32 million and \$39 million. Executive level positions will be hired in the 3rd quarter of this year and manager level would begin by the fourth quarter or early next year.

Q. When will the Murphy Casino open?

A. They estimate that the casino and hotel will open in June/July of 2015.

Q. Who did your group meet with from the new Casino?

A. We met with two gentlemen. Lumpy Lambert is the Assistant General Manager of the current Cherokee, N.C. Casino and will become the General Manager of the new Murphy Casino. He was accompanied by Ryan Downs, the project engineering manager. Both gentlemen were very nice and answered all questions posed to them.

Q. We saw a report from another area newspaper stating that 8,000 to 10,000 vehicles per day would be coming to the gaming tables. How will we be able to handle that much traffic coming through Blairsville?

A. According to a Traffic Impact Study prepared for Harrah's Casino Resort, the actual number of vehicles that will be coming to the casino and passing through the Murphy Hwy (US 19/129) and Hwy 64

intersection at Decker's Flea Market is estimated to be only 25 to 30 vehicles per hour and this is during the summer high season. This report contains similar numbers for GDOT estimates. If that actually continued day and night, it would only be an additional 720 vehicles per day during the summer season. So NCDOT and GDOT currently feel that the existing highways will be able to easily handle the new traffic. Remember, I am only passing along information we received. If you think about it, there are only 2,700 parking spaces at the casino and room for about 3000 people in the casino at one time.

However, having repeated this information to you, it would be completely accurate to say that no one really knows for sure, but at least the GDOT and Casino study estimates are manageable for us if true. If it turns out to be a lot more people than estimated, the casino is going to have a huge parking problem.

Q. Is the county still trying to have the Murphy Hwy. (Jack Lance Memorial Highway) widened to a four lane?

A. It has been my number one GDOT priority in the county ever since I got in office in 2001, after the Pat Colwell/Pat Haralson Intersection improvement. Had we not gone through a big recession in the past few years, it would have really become a big traffic problem by now. I am still trying to keep GDOT reminded of the importance of this highway expansion, as much for safety as for traffic flow. However, with shrinking transportation funds and the unwillingness of NCDOT to agree to widen their four mile portion of the highway, it will probably not happen any time soon, unless the Murphy Casino really grows and expands in the future.