

THE Beacon-News

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 3, 2026 | CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM/SUBURBS | \$2.00

Hollywood Casino to close June 10

A new location is on the way, set to open June 24

By R. Christian Smith
AURORA BEACON-NEWS

The riverboat Hollywood Casino in downtown Aurora is set to close on June 10 in anticipation of the casino's new \$360 million location in the city, officials announced Tuesday.

The new land-based Hollywood Casino in Aurora, set to open on June 24, is located along Farnsworth Avenue and Bilter Road, across

the street from Chicago Premium Outlets mall and near the Interstate 88 interchange. Not only will the new location offer a casino floor fit for around 1,200 people actively engaged in slot machines or table games, but it also will have a hotel, several restaurants, an event space and a spa.

"We are less than a month away from welcoming our loyal customers and guests to the new state-of-the-art Hollywood Casino Aurora," Jay Snowden, CEO and president of PENN Entertainment, which owns Hollywood Casino Aurora, said in a company press release. "Our Aurora

riverboat has created thousands of memorable experiences and supported economic development throughout the city for over three decades, and we look forward to replicating these successes for years to come."

The downtown riverboat location of Aurora's Hollywood Casino first opened on June 17, 1993. The front page of The Beacon-News read: "Tomorrow is here. After two decades of broken promises, fantasy plans and forgotten dreams, downtown redevelopment in Aurora is under way."

At that time, state law required

that casinos be on boats that floated independently — a big difference from today's laws allowing casinos on land. People had to buy tickets to get in and schedule their cruise times.

Laws were eventually loosened, and the downtown casino was made into a more permanent and stationary structure, although it remained a riverboat.

At its peak, the riverboat Hollywood Casino Aurora employed upwards of 1,500 people. For reference, the new land-based casino set to open soon is expected to have around 700 employees, which offi-

cial have said is double what the riverboat location currently has.

The casino also brings tax dollars into the city through a gaming tax, which at its peak in 2008 provided Aurora with \$15.4 million. Since then, that number has dwindled significantly.

The city of Aurora is supporting the new Hollywood Casino location through an agreed up-front payment of \$50 million, to be paid back to the city through a tax increment financing district on the property. The passage of that TIF district

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Gov. JB Pritzker takes questions after the end of the spring legislative session at the Illinois State Capitol in Springfield on Monday.
JOHN J. KIM/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

JB Pritzker touts wins in \$56B Illinois budget

Work in election-year plan went unfinished

By Dan Petrella
and Jack O'Connor
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

SPRINGFIELD — Speaking in his ceremonial office at the Illinois State Capitol hours after lawmakers voted early Monday morning to approve a nearly \$56 billion election-year state spending plan, Gov. JB Pritzker made

his case that eight years of his financial stewardship have put a once-struggling state on sounder footing.

Pointing to improved credit ratings, reduced pension liabilities and a replenished, albeit still comparatively small, rainy-day fund, Pritzker previewed the themes likely to define his bid for a rare third term as governor in November.

"From start to finish, the work of the legislative session we just completed was informed by the

priorities and values of Illinois families, like lowering costs, investing in and protecting our children, laying the foundation for long-term economic development and job creation, and improving our state's overall fiscal health," Pritzker said.

But the spring session he celebrated also had some business that went unfinished. A deal to help keep the Chicago Bears in Illinois collapsed in overtime. The majority of a Pritzker-backed suite of proposals to address high

housing prices never came to fruition, perhaps overshadowed by the more routine work of adopting a spending-and-tax plan for the budget year that begins July 1.

And Pritzker and fellow Democrats faced the familiar tension of trying to balance growing calls from the progressive left to generate more revenue to support state programs with a more centrist desire to avoid alienating business interests.

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How Bears' stadium deal fell

An echo of the 1988 White Sox drama

By Rick Pearson
and Jeremy Gorner
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

SPRINGFIELD — As the midnight adjournment deadline approached on the final night of Illinois' 1988 spring legislative session, a sense of pressure gripped the statehouse.

Gov. James R. Thompson and House Speaker Michael Madigan roamed the rows of the House chamber, offering trades — pet projects, promises of political support — in exchange for votes on a taxpayer-funded stadium to keep the Chicago White Sox from bolting to St. Petersburg, Florida.

When the clock hit midnight, an out-of-state TV reporter loudly declared, "That's it. That's it. The White Sox are going to Florida." He didn't know Illinois politics. The roll call stayed open until the 60th and final vote was secured at 12:03 a.m. — three minutes past the deadline, when it should have required 71 votes to pass. The bill was declared passed anyway, with the official roll call time recorded as 11:59 p.m.

Thirty-seven years later, the final Sunday night and early Monday of the recently adjourned spring legislative session had echoes of that frantic night. This time, lawmakers were scrambling over a stadium plan to keep the Chicago Bears from accepting an offer to move to Hammond, Indiana.

The Sox had at one time considered going to west suburban Addison on land the team purchased, but then weighed a Florida move. The Bears purchased the former Arlington International Racecourse

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Mid-American Canoe and Kayak Race set for Saturday on Fox River

By David Sharos
FOR THE AURORA BEACON-NEWS

An annual staple of the summer season in the Aurora area, the Mid-American Canoe and Kayak Race is set to draw hundreds of people to the Fox River on Saturday.

The Fox Valley Park District event, now in its 65th year, "combines competition, recreation and community spirit while showcasing the scenic Fox River corridor through St. Charles, Batavia, North Aurora and Aurora is a longstanding community tradition that continues to bring participants, volunteers and families together who are ready to kick off summer," according to Lynn Piotrowski, facility manager at Prisco Community Center in

Aurora, who is again overseeing the race.

The race will again feature a six-mile course that begins at the Batavia VFW, 645 S. River St. in Batavia, and a 10-mile course that will launch from Mt. St. Mary Park in St. Charles on Prairie Street east of Route 31. Race heats begin at 8:30 a.m. in St. Charles and 10 a.m. in Batavia.

Those looking to take part in the race must register at www.foxvalleyparkdistrict.org/event/mid-american-canoe-kayak-race-4/ or at the Prisco Community Center, 150 W. Illinois Ave. in Aurora.

Piotrowski, serving her third year as race manager, said she hopes the trend of growing participation in

the race continues following issues earlier this decade that included the pandemic as well as dangerously high water levels.

"We had to cancel the race one year because of COVID and there have been a couple of years around the pandemic where we had issues with the water levels," she said.

"People get on a circuit and put their races on a calendar, but we feel people have come back to the race," she said. "We are seeing families returning, many who have done it the past few years because now it's part of their summer routine."

Piotrowski said the race is basically split between those who enter looking to seriously compete along



The annual Mid-American Canoe and Kayak Race is set to be held Saturday, June 6, on the Fox River. FOX VALLEY PARK DISTRICT

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WEATHER FORECAST

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THU H:86 L:69
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