

43 towns get dealt \$118,000

Wind Creek casino host communities take in even more in first year

By Evy Lewis
Daily Southtown

One year since Wind Creek Chicago Southland opened, 41 towns in the south and south-west suburbs have each received \$118,154 in revenue from the casino's operations, and two others received a good deal more.

A total of 5% of the casino's revenue is distributed among local communities, mandated in the law creating the license. Of that, 2% is split between East Hazel Crest and Homewood, where the casino is located. Wind Creek is mostly in East Hazel Crest, but its parking garage is in Homewood.

The remaining 3% is split equally among the 43 municipalities, including East Hazel Crest and Homewood, and distributed monthly. As of Nov. 7, that came out to \$118,154.10 apiece. The money can only be used for capital improvement projects or pension payments.

"A lot of the municipalities are underfunded, so they use that money for their pension plans," said East Hazel Crest Village President Thomas Brown. "I think it probably draws some more businesses."

Flossmoor, one of the 43 municipalities, is putting its share of the money toward road resurfacing projects.

"From a municipal standpoint, we're pretty happy with the revenue, and that it's generating more revenue than we initially anticipated," said Flossmoor Mayor Michelle Nelson.

Nelson said that while the revenue doesn't go as far as one might think, it's still very welcome.

"That money is earmarked for infrastructure projects, specifically our roads. It costs up to about \$500,000 to repave and also fix the sidewalks and curbs on a mile of road," Nelson said. "So \$100,000, you could say, doesn't go a long way, but it does, you know, that's another almost quarter of a mile of road that we're gonna be able to resurface and fix the sidewalks on."

Other municipalities receiving monthly payments from the casino revenues are Beecher, Blue Island, Burnham, Calumet City, Calumet Park, Chicago Heights, Country Club Hills, Crestwood, Crete, Dixmoor, Dolton, Ford Heights, Glenwood, Harvey, Hazel Crest, Lansing, Lynwood, Markham, Matteson, Midlothian, Monee, Oak Forest, Olympia Fields, Orland Hills, Orland Park, Palos Heights, Park Forest, Phoenix, Posen, Rich-ton Park, Riverdale, Robbins, Sauk Village, South Chicago Heights, South Holland, Steger, Thornton, Tinley Park, University Park and

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Evergreen Park High School bowler Isaiah Matthews bowls Thursday at Arena Lanes in Oak Lawn, the current home for the school's bowling team. VINCENT D. JOHNSON/FOR THE DAILY SOUTHTOWN

A striking addition

Evergreen Park High School to add bowling alley to sports complex

By Olivia Stevens
Daily Southtown

Evergreen Park High School announced plans to add a bowling alley to its sports complex, becoming possibly the first high school in the state to do so.

The High School District 231 board approved the eight-lane bowling alley that will take the place of the existing fitness center at 2700 W. 91st St., according to a district news release.

The sports complex will get a new fitness center in the space where locker rooms are now located.

The high school's boys and girls bowling teams now practice and meet at Arena Lanes in Oak Lawn, which has become more crowded as other local alleys, including the former Blecker's Bowling Lanes in Evergreen Park, have closed, Athletic Director Jim Soldan said in a statement.

"This in turn makes availability to get lanes daily and over school breaks increasingly harder," Soldan said. "The ability to have our own eight-lane alley will allow our teams to practice and have meets anytime they want



A rendering shows the planned bowling alley that will be used by Evergreen Park High School programs and be open to the community. EVERGREEN PARK COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 231

with no additional charges for the school."

Soldan, who declined to be interviewed, said the athletic department also plans to use the alley for small tournaments and community events.

Maggie Jaklich, who was on the school's girls bowling team for four years, graduating in 2010, said many school teams have to compete for practice time at Arena Lanes.

"A lot of these bowling alleys (that closed) were kind of feeder programs into the high school," Jaklich said "It really promoted

the youth bowling and coaches were around getting youth bowlers interested in the sport who would then go and bowl for the high school."

Jaklich said now, a lot of schools miss those feeder opportunities and she said she's excited for the possibility of a community alley that could increase interest in the sport.

District 231 Board President Mary Zofkie said she was excited to support the new alley, which "honors a tradition that has long been part of Evergreen Park's history."

"We're thrilled to bring bowling back to Evergreen Park and provide our students and community with a new, state-of-the-art facility right here in our sports complex," Zofkie said. "We saw an opportunity to create something special that connects our school and community through recreation, competition and Mustang pride."

Construction on the bowling alley is expected to begin early next year for an August 2026 completion.

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Village leaders must replace mayor after guilty verdict

By Evy Lewis
Daily Southtown

Following Wednesday's guilty verdict in Riverdale Mayor Lawrence Jackson's trial for perjury and obstruction of justice, the village trustees will have to select an acting mayor until the next municipal election.

According to Illinois law, any person who has been convicted of a felony is automatically ineligible to hold public office unless they are pardoned or receive a restoration of rights from the governor. The statute says that a qualifying guilty plea or verdict constitutes an automatic resignation.

An attorney representing the village confirmed the mayor's position is now officially vacant following the verdict, and said the Riverdale Village Board would have to select an acting mayor from among its ranks to serve until the

April 2027 municipal election.

That will happen at an upcoming special board meeting that has not yet been scheduled.

Jackson was just reelected in April, and has served less than a year of his fourth term. Per state law, when a vacancy opens in a four-year elected position with more than 28 months remaining in the term, and there are more than 130 days before the next general municipal election, then that position will be filled at that election.

Rena Poulos, one of two primary challengers who ran against Jackson for mayor in February, said in an email statement that Riverdale was at a turning point.

"Riverdale is at a critical crossroads," Poulos said. "As someone who has lived in this village since 1989, I have witnessed firsthand how our community has changed. I have seen safety decline, services fall apart, and years of instability

and mismanagement weaken the trust of residents."

Poulos said that she was "absolutely prepared" to run for mayor again in the special election.

"This moment is not just about a change in leadership," Poulos said. "It is an opportunity for a fresh start. Riverdale needs ethical, prepared, community centered leadership that understands where we have been and has a clear plan for where we must go. I remain committed to being that leader and to helping move our village toward a safer, stronger, and more united future."

Following the Wednesday conviction, Michael A. Smith, a former Dixmoor trustee, announced on Facebook he will run for mayor in the special election. Smith specified in the post that he had no convictions that

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Riverdale Mayor Lawrence Jackson arrives at the Dirksen U.S. Courthouse in Chicago for his trial on Wednesday. DOMINIC DI PALERMO/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

