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Long Beach Needs to Look for Source of Revenue: What About an Indian Casino?

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Face it. We are not going to be the retail mecca of Southern California that derives its City budget from sales tax revenue. (Especially when we keep giving some of it away as an incentive to come here...)

Our residents will not support (rightfully) an increase in the utility use tax or special assessment fees.

The three top employers in the City are public agencies: CSULB, LBUSD and the City of Long Beach.

More than 40% of the City is in a “redevelopment zone” which means we lose the tax increment so it can be used to spruce up areas that largely do not generate additional tax revenue.

Our ability to attract tourism is minimal because we compete with Disneyland, Knott's Berry Farm and Universal Studios.

We are hoping that somebody will step forward and “put lipstick on the pig” as one person described the Queen Mary to me one day, so that visitors will have a reason to go back after their one and only visit there.

The Port of Los Angeles is kicking in big bucks to build a cruise terminal on their side of the port that will draw all the big cruise lines — Disney has already announced it is ordering two new cruise ships to run out of the new terminal that will have shops, restaurants and other places passengers and others can visit before and after cruises. (I took my family on a cruise out of Long Beach last year and it was a bleak, bleak setting for visitors.) This means Long Beach may lose its cruise business.

So what's a city to do?

I would not have proposed this several years ago because there is a part of me that believes government should not encourage gambling — but folks, the City of Long Beach is losing out on an opportunity to capture revenue by allowing gambling in or around the Queen Mary area — an area by the way that is no where near a residential area.

The reason I have changed my mind about pursuing this avenue is that poker has become mainstreamed through the televised games of the World Poker Tour (WPT) — which is based in Culver City and should be lured away to set up shop in Long Beach. Even last week, the Jewish Community Center in Long Beach held a “Texas Hold’em Boot Camp” for women to teach women how to compete in an upcoming tournament. (Last year, Long Beach Community Hospital Foundation used a poker tournament as a fundraising device.)

We have a couple of options: card clubs where poker and other card games are played are legal throughout California with the approval of the residents of Long Beach. Indian casinos which offer Las Vegas type gambling are also legal in California with certain approvals. The Gabrielino-Tongva tribal nation of the Los Angeles basin has roots in the Long Beach area and can apply for recognition for a casino in Long Beach. Don’t believe me? Check the following link out about what the City of Compton is proposing to do with this tribe:

http://www.tongvatribes.org/EmpiricalStudies/LA_County_full_study_final_7_6_05.pdf

Long Beach would have to be careful how we enter into this area. But other cities have done it successfully without an increase in crime or problems in the residential areas and have realized a steady source of revenue to fund city services.



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