

Statement of Fort Wayne Mayor Tom Henry on the issue of gaming:

We are living in difficult, and for far too many, desperate economic times. With each new day, my concern for the health of our community and our people grows. I see businesses stretched to the limits. I see people losing jobs, homes, tuition for college, retirement savings – and with each of those challenges, some of our hopes and dreams for the future vanish as well.

We're worried about the basics: staying employed, keeping warm, feeding our families, paying the mortgage, finding health care – all the things that add up to basic security for ourselves, our children and our grandchildren.

On top of this, the City anticipates a sizable budget shortfall next year, worsened by the economic meltdown, but due in large part to changes made by state government.

We are living in uncertain, unsettled economic times. As your Mayor, I look around and ask: What can I do to strengthen our community? How can I help the citizens of Fort Wayne? How can I ensure a hometown that's an attractive, vibrant place to live? How can I bolster revenue without adding to taxpayer burdens?

The residents of Fort Wayne have always been able to rely upon the City to deliver high-quality, cost-effective services -- no matter what the economic climate. It is a promise we have always kept. We've succeeded because of sound fiscal management coupled with innovation. I am committed to both.

Our green initiatives. Our applications of new technologies, like 311. Our use of proven management techniques to reduce costs and improve efficiencies. Each of these is building a more robust and more responsive, *but leaner* City government.

Nevertheless, running the City *better on less* requires us to be proactive, to constantly seek new ideas and new ways of doing things.

Recently, several groups have come to us. They are exploring the potential for gaming in our community. Once again the City is doing what it should be doing.

Step one: We're listening and talking to those with the ideas. We've made it clear that we're open to meeting with anyone who wants to bring a *viable* proposal to the table.

Step two. We're taking action. I've directed my staff to study the issue. As a community, we need to be informed and prepared. As your Mayor, I want to be in the best position possible to represent the community's interests. It is a responsibility I take very seriously – and knowledge is the key. We all know you can't negotiate well, shape plans or make informed decisions, without solid, objective information.

As our work unfolds, we may need specialized counsel and expert assistance. If we do, we will determine how best to secure that help. The Fort Wayne City Council will be our partner in this endeavor.

You may be wondering why all of this is happening now. The answer: The upcoming session of the Indiana General Assembly. The legislative calendar is driving the actions of various private business interests, and in turn our need to delve into this matter.

As Mayor, I am keenly aware that others look to me for guidance. That is why research and analysis are imperative. I could not take a position on an issue of this magnitude – for or against, or ask the people of Fort Wayne to consider it, without having completely examined it or knowing what its impact on our community might be.

I certainly could not ask members of City Council, our state legislators or other civic leaders to take a stand on an idea without a careful investigation of it – *and* confidence in it myself. It wouldn't be good business. And it wouldn't be good public stewardship. For me, leadership demands responsibility, carried through with thoughtfulness and thoroughness.

To date, we have not been presented with any specific proposals. We look forward to seeing them, as we welcome plans for any new business venture that creates jobs, grows our economy and enhances our community. You can be sure that any specific proposal received will be given its own comprehensive evaluation.

We are living in painful economic times. It would be irresponsible for the City not to talk to individuals interested in gaming because of the potential revenue it could create to help us provide the level of services expected by our residents and necessary to keep us competitive.

It would be equally irresponsible for us not to be doing our homework. *We are doing our homework.* And we are doing it thoughtfully and thoroughly.

Working together, we will sustain one another through these tough times. Working together, we are all partners in building a brighter, stronger future for our community.

Thank you.