

# Beacon

The West Volusia

## OC mayor confirms meeting about poker room

BY AL EVERSON

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Where there's smoke, there's fire. And, where there are rumors swirling about the possible advent of gambling in Southwest Volusia, there is likely a kernel of truth.

Orange City Mayor Tom Laputka confirmed he has talked with representatives of the Daytona Beach Kennel Club about a proposal to open a card room or poker room in Orange City.

"I sat and listened to them for 15 or 20 minutes," Laputka told *The Beacon*.

The meeting, he said, took place at Orange City Town Hall July 13, according to his check of contacts and his calendar.

Laputka said Daytona Beach Kennel Club President Daniel Francati was one of the people with whom he talked. Francati declined to discuss the conversation.

"Right now, I have no comment," Francati said.

He would not rule out additional contacts or discussions.

Under Florida law, pari-mutuel gambling firms — horse racing and dog racing — may set up a card room on their main premises and another within 25 miles of the racetrack. So, the Daytona Beach Kennel Club could establish a branch card room in addition to the one it now operates at

## POKER

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the track.

"They wanted us to come over and see the card room. I have not done that yet," Laputka said. "I will take them up on the invite."

Word of a possible card room or poker parlor in Orange City surfaced recently, when City Council Member Ron Saylor asked for more information about development regulations that may affect "gaming."

Saylor, when asked about the proposal, offered few specifics, but said he had heard those interested

in setting up a card room may want to put it in the old Marketplace Shopping Center formerly anchored by a Kmart, at the intersection of Saxon Boulevard and Enterprise Road.

City planners contacted by *The Beacon* said no applications for a gambling business have been filed, and no documentation of meetings between city officials and gambling promoters exists.

City Council Member Tom Abraham said he, too, had met with "Daytona Kennel Club guys and an attorney representing them ... to get a feel about a card room."

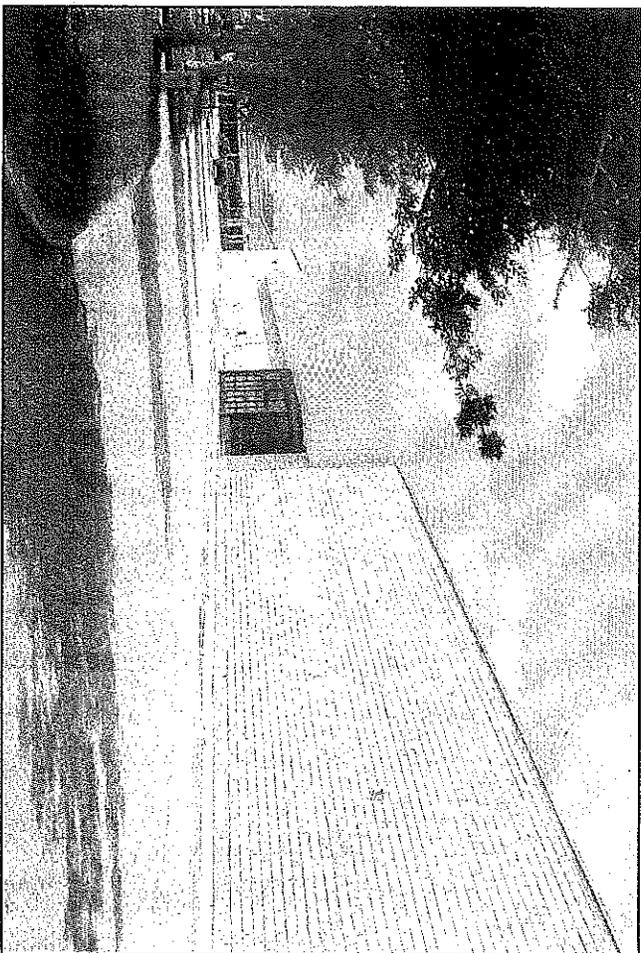
Laputka could not say when he may visit the card room at the Daytona

Beach Kennel Club, but he indicated he has not made up his mind about such an operation in Orange City.

"We've got many church families here, and that certainly has to be a factor in that," Laputka said.

The possibility of gambling in Orange City comes just a few months after the DeBary City Council refused once again to permit development of a horse track and card room on a prime tract near the Sun-Rail depot.

Asked if he had talked with anyone from the Daytona Beach Kennel Club about setting up a poker room in Deltona, Mayor John Masiarczyk said he had not had any such contacts or conversations.



**Smoke and fire** — Rumors circulating about a proposed card room in Orange City indicate that those interested in setting up a card room may want to put it in the old Marketplace Shopping Center pictured above, formerly anchored by a Kmart, at the intersection of Saxon Boulevard and Enterprise Road

BEACON PHOTO/AL EVERSON

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## Officials: Kennel Club revives interest in Orange City

Cardroom proposal, withdrawn in 2011, could be revived at new site

By Mark Harper  
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The Daytona Beach Kennel Club has expressed an interest in locating a cardroom in West Volusia, Orange City officials said this week.

City Manager Jamie Croteau, Mayor Tom Laputka and other Council members say they have met with Kennel Club General Manager Dan Francati and others in recent weeks. The plan would be to renovate the old cinema

in the Orange City Marketplace at 822 Saxon Boulevard, council members said.

Francati declined comment Wednesday on the plans. He said the Kennel Club, owned by Delaware North Corp., owns a license that allows a second cardroom within 30 miles.

In 2010, the Kennel Club filed plans with Orange City to open a cardroom across the street from the Marketplace site, in a different shopping plaza. Those plans called for the creation of 151 jobs, but were later withdrawn. At the time, Francati said he liked Orange City's population density, commercial character and vicinity to Interstate 4,

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## KENNEL CLUB

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which could draw customers from the Orlando market.

"Their demographics vastly improve when they come to a site like Orange City versus a site like Daytona Beach," Laputka said.

The mayor said he met with the Kennel Club group for 30 minutes on July 13, one of several individual meetings with Council members.

"They were feeling the air, getting a sense of that," he said.

Bill Crippen, another councilman, said he "listened politely," and said

he was happy to hear the proposed site had changed.

"I thought (the old movie theater) was a better location," Crippen said.

Another councilman, Vice Mayor Gary Blair, said he also prefers the Marketplace as a site.

"That's probably the best location in town," Blair said. "It would help revitalize that shopping center ... and it's far from residential areas."

Blair said one of his concerns — crime — would be addressed by the Kennel Club's security force.

"From what I understand, they have their own security team, which

keeps calls to our police department to a minimum," he said.

The City Council in neighboring DeBary recently declined a chance to hear a proposal from a developer who wanted to build a horse track and cardroom near the SunRail station. Steve Costa, one of the developers, said his license is limited to that parcel in DeBary.

Laputka said he has not taken a position on supporting the expansion of legal gambling to Orange City, but he wouldn't be surprised if there is some objection.

"The west side, we're a little more conservative thinking," he said.

THE INDEPENDENT VOICE OF VOLUSIA & FLAGLER COUNTIES

# OPINION &

## Waiting for development in DeBary

Transportation planners have always envisioned the SunRail station in DeBary as a magnet for economic development, much the way other depots along the train's route through Seminole and Orange counties have attracted billions of dollars in new projects.

Unfortunately, it could use some juice. A year after the commuter rail service began in the rural West Volusia town, the area surrounding the station remains more cow pasture than commercial. That's cause for patience, not concern.

Clearly, though, the station, and the community, would benefit from having *something* there.

As detailed by The News-Journal's Mark Harper, more than \$3 billion worth of projects, such as townhomes, luxury

### OUR VIEW

apartments, offices and retail, have been completed, are underway or have been announced within a 10-minute walk of SunRail's existing train stations. The rail service and the Florida Department of Transportation estimate those developments will generate more than 32,000 jobs.

DeBary's station has produced zero dollars and zero jobs, and none are in the pipeline. It's not the only one that so far has been left behind the building boom.

Stops in Altamonte Springs and Sand Lake Road also have yet to blossom.

Not surprisingly, the most growth has been in the densely populated urban centers of

Orlando: Lynx Central (\$1.5 billion), Florida Hospital (\$452.5 million) and Orlando Health (\$533 million). Those hospitals employ thousands of workers, many of whom take the train, and Lynx Central is across from the Amway Center.

Still, the outlying suburbs, such as Lake Mary, Longwood and Maitland, have succeeded in attracting what is known as transit-oriented development (TOD), mixed-use projects that include housing, office and retail that thrive on the convenience of mass transportation and an area's walkability.

For example, Maitland's City Council in April approved replacing an old lumber yard next to its SunRail station with a \$36.5 million apartment complex.

DeBary has the space to do

something similar, but its rural characteristics call for a deliberate approach. For instance, the area surrounding the station is both industrial — there's a Duke Energy power plant nearby — and ecologically sensitive — Gemini Springs Park is less than a mile away. That makes it difficult to surround the station with new development.

However, DeBary also has an inviting series of trails that, coupled with SunRail service, would likely appeal to residents who work in Orlando but who would enjoy the laid-back lifestyle of West Volusia living.

In 2011, SunRail released concept art and a TOD vision for each of its proposed stations. Its ambitions for DeBary (tinyurl.com/pvw72m7) included a "limited amount of mixed-use in the immediate station area; offices

and retail to the south; and multi-family residential to both the north and south that transitions to single family residential furthest from the station."

It's important that any development fit with the character of DeBary — it's not Lake Mary. City officials and developers should examine the best practices of other rural communities and how they integrated mass transportation with economic growth, particularly those that successfully harnessed the "rails and trails" concept.

Just having an adjacent cafe would get the DeBary station development rolling down the tracks, with residential units being the next project. SunRail development eventually should arrive in West Volusia. It just will take a little longer to get there.