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**Title: Locations of casinos up for vote**

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The City Commission will vote Tuesday on whether to extend temporary rules on where casinos can be located in Great Falls.

But it's a pretty safe bet you won't find a new casino in your neighborhood anytime soon, unless someone sells an existing liquor license to be used in a new location.

A business needs a state liquor license to get a gambling license, and no more liquor licenses are available in Great Falls.

Under the rules enacted last summer, casinos can be opened only downtown and in general commercial or industrial zones.

Except for downtown, the casino property must be surrounded by at least seven lots that are zoned the same. Casinos aren't allowed next to residential lots or in adult entertainment establishments, such as strip clubs.

"If the city wanted to stop the growth of casinos, they should have made their rules 10 years ago," said Steven Potts, a Great Falls attorney who represents casino owners.

"I don't see any reason to single out casinos for the restrictive zoning," Potts said. "I think neighborhoods would rather have a casino than some other businesses, such as a gas station or a pawn shop," he added.

Casino owner Doug Palagi plans to attend Tuesday's public hearing, but he hasn't decided whether he will speak.

"I don't love it, but it might be a good idea to extend the rules," he said. "It's this, as opposed to what?" he asked. "They're working on new land-use codes, but nobody knows what they're going to say."

Commissioners made the rules last summer to allow time for completion of the new land-use code. The extension is proposed because the consultant working on the code, Vierbicher and Associates of Madison, Wis., needs more time.

Last summer's rules expire Thursday, along with temporary zoning regulations for new sexually oriented businesses.

Before they vote on whether to extend the rules for up to a year, commissioners will conduct a public hearing on the issue.

Also proposed for an extension of up to a year are regulations banning sexually oriented businesses in all zoning districts except general commercial and first- and second-industrial districts. The businesses may not be located within 600 feet of parks, day cares, churches and residentially zoned property and may not serve alcohol on the premises.

Before voting on the extension, commissioners will hear public comment on these rules, too.

In other business Tuesday night, commissioners will schedule a March 16 public hearing on the annexation and zoning of the 20-acre Loy School site and a 2,700-foot segment of 57th Street North.

In 1963, when Loy School was built, it connected to water and sewer service at nearby Malmstrom Air Force Base because city utilities weren't available. Extension of city utilities in connection with the upcoming Northeast Bypass reconstruction allows the school to hook up with the city, according to Cheryl Patton, assistant city manager.

"The annexation is strictly motivated by the utilities," she said. Annexation charges, including the storm drain fee of \$250 per acre and a share of water line extension, are being waived, she added.

"It makes sense not to require one taxing jurisdiction to pay another, when the same taxpayers are involved," Patton explained.

Zoning of the property is proposed as A-residence use, A-district, which allows schools.

Commissioners also will consider construction agreements with the Montana Department of Transportation relating to upcoming reconstruction of 13th Street South from 10th Avenue South to 21st Avenue South and the Northeast Bypass between 38th Street North and 2nd Avenue North.

During their work session before the 7 p.m. meeting, Jerry Sepich, director of parks and recreation, will outline a proposal to charge boat launching fees at Broadwater Bay. The fees will cover the salary of a person who will oversee the safe use of the docks by boaters and swimmers.

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Courtesy of [www.casinoman.net](http://www.casinoman.net)

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