

IX.2.a  
Report on Local Impacts and Costs



Village of South Blooming Grove, NY

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## Table of Contents

- I. Study Purpose
- II. Background, Qualifications and Experience
- III. Local Impacts and Costs

## **I. Study Purpose**

The Request for Applications to Develop and Operate a Gaming Facility in New York State includes a requirement to evaluate local impact and siting factors. The purpose of this requirement is to identify and describe potential impacts that might be expected to be experienced by the community in which the casino is located and in other nearby communities. These impacts relate to the development and operation of a relatively large facility that will attract substantial numbers of patrons, visitors and employees to the area. As a result, it is necessary to examine the ability of the area's physical infrastructure and service providers to adequately handle increased demands. This information can then be utilized to identify mitigation measures appropriate to limiting possible negative effects from development of the hotel/casino complex.

In response to this requirement, VHB has prepared the following report covering Section IX.A.2.a Local Impacts and Costs.

## **II. Background, Qualifications and Experience**

VHB is a multi-disciplinary firm employing more than 900 planners, designers, engineers, environmental scientists and support personnel in 22 offices along the East Coast. Among the firm's casino and gaming project experience is the Caesars at Suffolk Downs resort and casino in East Boston and plans for an Ameristar resort and casino in Springfield, Massachusetts. The firm recently completed transportation and site assessments on behalf of a casino operator in the New York Metropolitan area, coordinated environmental analyses and documentation for redevelopment of the Concord Resort in Sullivan County to include casino and convention space and conducted planning and environmental studies related to development of the Foxwoods Resort Casino and the Mohegan Sun Resort. Other related experience of VHB staff includes work relative to the Narragansett Casino in West Warwick, Rhode Island, the SugarHouse Casino in Philadelphia, Empire City Casino in Yonkers and several casinos in Atlantic City.

In New York State, VHB and its staff have prepared hundreds of Environmental Impact Statements (EIS's) in accordance with the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA). Typically, these documents include analyses of the costs and benefits to local municipalities of proposed developments - residential, commercial, industrial, entertainment, recreational, institutional or some combination of one or more of these uses. This entails examining the characteristics of the proposed use, identifying the demands it is expected to place on local facilities and services and comparing them with the capacity of local governments to handle possible increased demands. Where residential development is proposed, impacts on local school systems are evaluated to ascertain how the potential increase in enrollments might affect school district facilities and budgets. By its nature, the proposed hotel and casino would have specific characteristics that would affect the needs it might generate for services and facilities in the area. These characteristics have been taken into account in the analyses described below.

### **III. Local Impacts and Costs**

While the proposed hotel/casino complex will, to a great extent, operate in a self-contained manner, the on-site population of staff, guests and visitors will have impacts on the Host Municipality including expanded demands for emergency services (police, fire, ambulance – see Exhibit 1 Location of Emergency Services) among other things. For emergency services, local concerns would be expected to focus on the increased number of people working, visiting and staying in the area and the ability of these service providers to handle the influx. The current capabilities of each emergency service provider are described below and the anticipated magnitude and character of each of potential impacts are discussed. Finally, possible measures to mitigate any such impacts are described.

#### **A. Existing Conditions**

##### **1. Fire Protection**

Fire protection for the casino/hotel complex would be provided by the South Blooming Grove Fire District. The district, which covers the Village of South Blooming Grove and certain adjoining areas, has its firehouse located just north of the site on Route 208. In discussions<sup>1</sup>, a fire district representative indicated that response times from that location to the casino site would be only one to two minutes and that vehicle access would not be impacted by traffic to and from the casino since the vast majority of that traffic would be arriving and leaving via Route 208 south to Route 17.

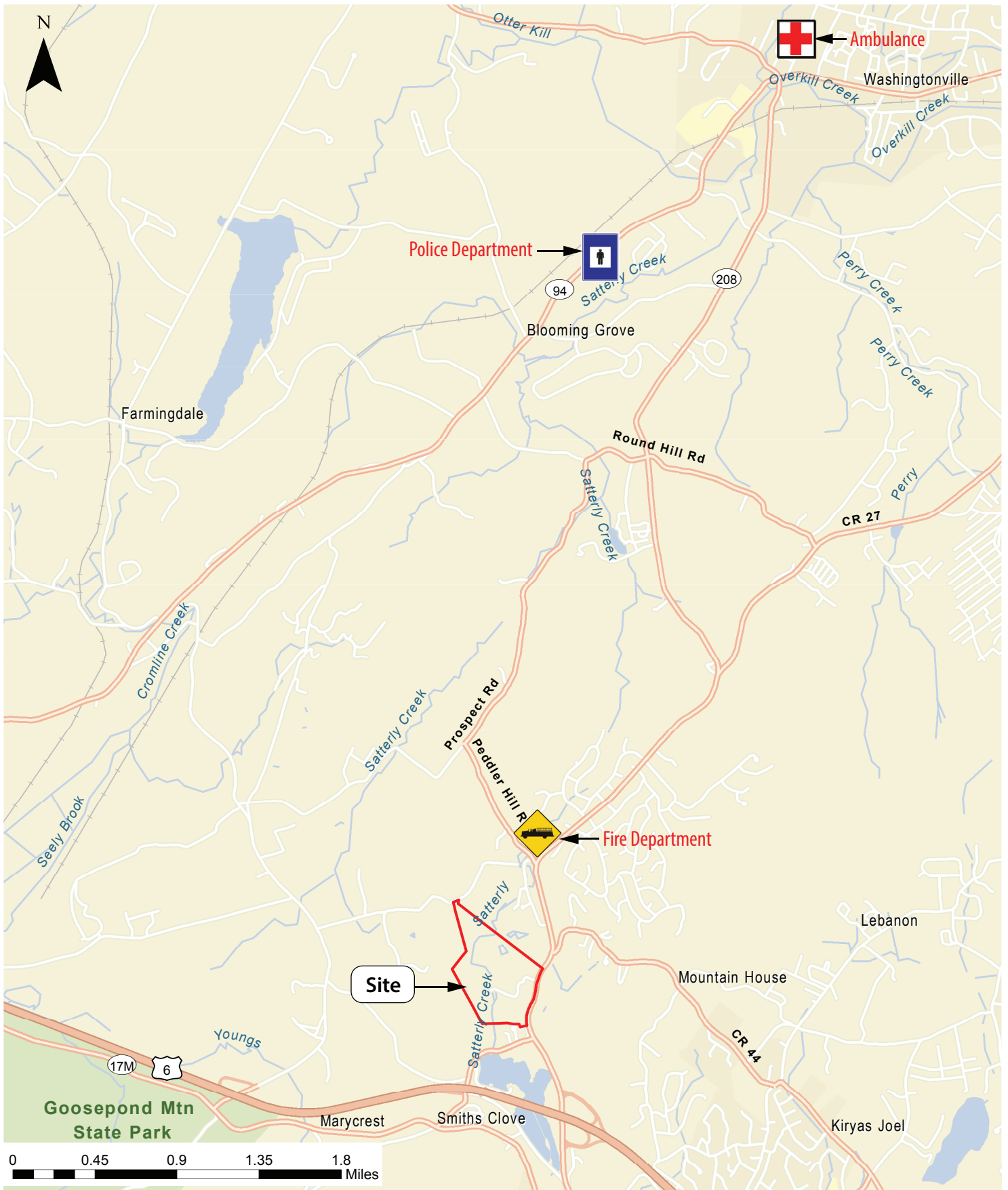
The District currently has about 48 personnel, all volunteer. Training sessions are held weekly. Equipment includes two pumpers (1500 and 1250 gallons), a 100 foot aerial ladder truck and a rescue rig with state of the art equipment manned by EMT's.

Over the course of a year, the District handles approximately 250 to 320 calls, primarily for medical emergencies for which they function as first responders; the Ambulance Corps (see below) is responsible for transport to hospitals. The District fights approximately 10 to 15 fires in a typical year. For anything substantial, they are part of an Orange County mutual aid arrangement and so receive assistance from and provide assistance to other nearby fire companies. To ensure that everyone is prepared for a possible fire event, pre-planning is carried out for major facilities such as hospitals, etc. Similar training would likely be undertaken for the casino as well.

Under New York State law, the District functions as a municipality for property tax purposes, levying a tax on the assessed value of properties within its boundaries. These funds are used for general operating purposes. For specific needs such as purchase of major equipment, voters are asked to authorize borrowing by means of a bond issue. The District's current annual budget is just under \$500,000.

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<sup>1</sup> Telephone discussion with William Schultz, Board of Fire Commissioners, June 12, 2014.



VILLAGE OF SOUTH BLOOMING GROVE, NEW YORK  
**EXHIBIT 1 - EMERGENCY SERVICE PROVIDERS**

## 2. Police

Police protection in the area is primarily provided by the Town of Blooming Grove Police Department with related services provided by the Orange County Sheriff's Department and the New York State Police. Both the County and the State provide road patrols and the State has a vehicle assigned to Blooming Grove.<sup>2</sup> The County also has a Division of Police Liaison Services whose objective is to assist law enforcement agencies in the county by establishing programs and logistical support. While there is no formal arrangement for mutual aid among the local police forces, officers are permitted to assist in adjoining towns and villages if they are called upon.

The department is located at 2 Horton Street in Blooming Grove and operates 13 vehicles. Chief Schupp estimated that response time to the casino would be no more than five minutes. Current staffing includes 13 full-time employees including 11 uniformed personnel or detectives; consideration is being given to possibly adding an additional officer. The current annual budget is \$1,372,203 and is funded by the property tax levy.

## 3. Ambulance

The Blooming Grove Volunteer Ambulance Corps is a not-for-profit corporation; it is not a municipal entity and, as such, receives no direct tax revenues. Its annual budget of approximately \$750,000 comes from the Town (\$300,000) and from billing for services (\$450,000).<sup>3</sup> The Corps, which serves the Town of Blooming Grove and a portion of the Town of Hamptonburgh, is located at 7 North Street in the Village of Washingtonville, approximately five miles north of the project site. Response time to the site is estimated to be 10 minutes.

The Corps has 35 volunteer members and 30 paid employees. Their functions include:

- Basic life support and transport – EMT's: volunteers plus 13 paid employees
- Advanced life support – Paramedics: 17 paid employees

The Corps has four vehicles: 2 ambulances and 2 paramedic fly cars. The vehicles are dispatched by the County and are sent at the same time as the Fire Department. The Corps receives approximately 1500 calls per year, 90% of which are within the Town of Blooming Grove.

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<sup>2</sup> Telephone discussion with Chief Carl Schupp, June 16, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Telephone discussion with Brian Bates, Blooming Grove Ambulance Corps, June 17, 2014.

#### 4. Other Municipal Expenditures

In addition to the possible impacts on emergency service providers, the proposed development also needs to be considered in terms of how Village services and expenditures might be affected. Given its size, the casino/hotel would be by far the largest complex in South Blooming Grove. As discussed elsewhere in this application, the addition of substantial numbers of people – workers, visitors, patrons – would impact traffic volumes, utility demands and calls for emergency services. However, because the project would not add any resident population, it would not affect those Village operations that relate directly to resident needs (e.g., recreation) or administrative functions (e.g., mailing of tax bills).

In terms of how the Village would handle any increased costs of providing services to the casino, it is anticipated that the substantial property tax revenues that the Village would receive from the casino complex on an annual basis would substantially exceed any additional local municipal costs incurred. For building inspections, which are expected to require retaining reviewers with the types of specific professional experience necessary to adequately review construction of this type and scale, the building permit fee for the development, calculated on the basis of 1% of hard costs, would bring in substantially more in tax revenues than would be required to pay for such expertise.

The application also notes addiction services as a potential impact category. Such services are not provided directly by the Village of South Blooming Grove. However, a search of the New York State Department of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services website shows numerous service providers in Orange County and nearby counties providing prevention and treatment services relating to gambling addiction. The Department runs a toll free 24-hour helpline at 1-877-8-HOPENY (1-877-846-7369) to provide assistance in finding a problem gambling prevention or treatment program. There are numerous providers serving the Hudson Valley Region. In addition, Orange County has a Department of Mental Health that helps to ensure that quality Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Chemical Dependency services are accessible to all the people of Orange County. The County also provides a mental health team that is available 24-hour, 7-days a week on a hotline at 1-888-750-2266.

#### **B. Potential Impacts**

Experience at other casino facilities similar to the one proposed has shown that the preponderance of police calls occur on site rather than in the surrounding community. This was found to be the case, for example, in the area around the Foxwoods Casino in Ledyard, Connecticut.<sup>4</sup> There, it was concluded that the increase in serious crimes occurred primarily on casino premises and that “the off-site incidence was found to be at historic low levels.”

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<sup>4</sup> *Live! Casino Impact Assessment, Report to the City of Leominster, Mass., B&S Consulting, 9/17/2013., p.8.*

In April 2014, the Orange County Department of Emergency Services issued a report titled, "Impact of Casinos on the Emergency Services of Orange County, New York." In preparing the report, the Department contacted emergency service providers across New York and Connecticut communities where casinos are located and asked about the impacts experienced due to these facilities. The overall conclusion of the report was that, "casinos have had a minimal impact in terms of crime rates, medical calls, fire related incidents, and emergency management activities." For example, in Connecticut it was reported that each of the two casinos generated three to four ambulance calls per week. The report noted that the most significant impacts are from the traffic generated by the casinos and the related increase in traffic incidents. The report did note that the presence of the casinos had led to needs for additional emergency equipment and specific training for local providers. These factors should all be considered in the development of mitigation measures to be proposed as part of the hotel/casino complex in South Blooming Grove and as discussed below and in the following section.

With regard to fire protection, the development of the proposed facility, which would be significantly larger than anything else within the district, raises a number of concerns as expressed by a District representative. These relate to possible needs for:

- Adequate water supply and pressure onsite for firefighting
- Newer and/or larger vehicles to supplement or replace existing older ones in order to handle any fires at the casino
- Additional volunteers or, possibly, paid staff, particularly during the day when fewer volunteers are available locally
- Additional hand-held equipment to deal with the specific conditions encountered in a hotel and other portions of the complex as compared with the predominantly residential fires that they now handle..
- Training to enable the fire company to understand how best to handle the particular characteristics of a possible fire at a facility of the size and nature of the one proposed.

As noted above, experience at other similar facilities suggests that the casino would create little in the way of criminal activity off-site. Consistent with such other experience, Chief Schupp indicated that he anticipates traffic-related issues to be the main impact on his department. At this time, he assumes that one patrol car would be assigned to the casino. With the casino in full operation, the Department would likely need to add both staff and vehicles to handle the increased activity in the area. It might also be necessary to negotiate a change in union rules relative to staffing assignments in order to match the peak hours of the casino and to ensure 24-hour coverage. With the County 911 system based in Goshen, a 911 call received from the casino would alert State, County and local police.

The population on site during operations will, inevitably, create a demand for emergency medical services as patrons and workers are injured or become ill. Because the Ambulance Corps' facility is currently located at the north end of the Town, a representative noted that they would like to move it closer to the center of the Town, and thus closer to the site of the proposed casino, so as to be better able to reach their overall service area. In the alternative, construction of a second



substation is a possibility but would require: 2 paid EMT's at \$55,000 each (salary and benefits) = \$110,000; and, purchase of an additional ambulance at approximately \$110,000.

Several concerns relative to design and operation of the proposed casino/hotel were also raised, including the need to ensure that:

- Ambulances (10 feet, 5 inches high) can access the parking garage
- Elevators can accommodate stretchers
- Access is provided for EMT's

#### **SOURCES:**

##### **Orange County Department of Emergency Services**

- Impact of Casinos on the Emergency Services of Orange County, New York, (April 2014)

##### **State of Connecticut, Division of Special Revenue**

- Gambling in Connecticut: Analyzing the Economic and Social Impacts, June 2009 prepared by Spectrum Gaming Group

##### **B&S Consulting**

- Live! Casino Impact Assessment, Report to the City of Leominster, Mass., (9/17/2013)