

# Steering committee reviews applications for gaming money

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Various municipalities, agencies and organizations are seeking a share of the Fayette County gaming money, but it appears only a small number of the requests will receive a portion of the funding.

The Local Share Account (LSA) steering committee met Monday to review the nearly 60 applications that had been submitted and then rated the the requests for their respective compliance to the guidelines.

“They are all good projects,” said Andrew French, county Redevelopment Authority executive director.

“However, when you have \$4.4 million in project requests and only \$1.1 million in available funding, some are not going to make the final cut.”

Earlier this year, the county commissioners appointed the authority to establish the LSA for the Lady Luck Casino at Nemaquin Woodlands Resort revenue and implement criteria for its distribution.

The \$1.1 million was received from July 2013 through June 2015.

Drawing the most interest were projects that had other funding committed to it and are ready to implement.

A South Union Township request to supplement the cost of construction of the Fort Gaddis Trail Spur of the Sheepskin Trail was among them.

According to the application, the township is seeking \$75,000 in LSA funds that will



Andrew French

French

be added to the \$330,000 the municipality has already allocated to the project.

The creation and retention of jobs drew the attention of the steering committee to consider the application of the Private Industry Council of Westmoreland/Fayette Inc. on behalf of MicroDiamant Building Retrofit and Shumar Welding.

Both companies are located in the Georges Township business park.

In the application, Sean Sypolt, industry council vice president of education and workforce development, said that if the \$81,000 was allocated, MicroDiamant would add four furnaces and other equipment to allow the addition of a manufacturing line.

Headquartered in Switzerland, the company would move the specialty work to its Smithfield location, said Sypolt.

“This project will allow for better world competition for the grinding compound product that competes directly with China and other world-based manufacturers,” he said. “The project also will allow for the future consideration for employee growth through the modernization of the physical site.”

Shumar would add an electrical heat treating furnace to maintain its contract with General Electric. The funding would allow the company to retain 10 current positions and add five additional jobs.

The owners would invest a total of \$31,000 for the \$113,000 total project.

The steering committee also recommended consideration for two revolving business loan programs.

Fay-Penn Economic Development Council is seeking \$250,000 to re-capitalize its in-place loan program while the Connellsville Redevelopment Authority is requesting \$150,000 in LSA funds to implement a local program.

“The (small business loan program) has been such a successful program that the demand for financing far outweighs the funding availability,” said Robert E. Shark, Fay-Penn executive director, adding that the fund has been re-capitalized twice since its implementation in 2010 to meet the needs of the small business community. “Currently, there are no remaining funds in (the program) to provide to small business, and \$80,000 of loan applications exist in the pipeline.”

Connellsville Authority Executive Director Michael Edwards said that the Grow Connellsville loan program would be used to enhance the economic vitality of the city by encouraging businesses to locate within the city limits and aid small businesses already in place.

“The community impact will be seen by reducing the number of vacant store fronts in the city with the establishment of new businesses as well as with the expansion of existing businesses,” said Edwards.

The committee also recommended that consideration be given to an application submitted by the Fayette County Airport Authority.

The authority is seeking \$120,000 in LSA funding to replace the hangar door of the fixed base operation building and make improvements to the facade of the 1940s-built structure.

Commissioner Al Ambrosini said that as the authority continues to make improvements to the airport, it also plans to increase its services, including a charter service that could be housed in the operation building.

The authority noted that it has allocated \$20,000 for the estimated \$140,000 project.

Other projects that garnered the attention of the LSA panel included an entrepreneurial contest by Dunbar Borough.

According to the application, the requested \$10,000 would support an initiative to identify local entrepreneurs who would be interested in opening or a expanding a business in the borough.

A similar program to lure new business is also being proposed by Masontown Matters.

The requested \$74,000 in LSA funds would be added to the \$28,700 the organization has received through grants and private donations to rehabilitate a site for use as a business incubator.

A Fay-Penn project to redevelop the former VFW building in Uniontown also generated interest by the steering committee.

According to Shark, the requested \$165,000 LSA funds would be used to repair and repave the parking lot and sidewalks and install new fencing.

French said the next step will be to prioritize the projects for consideration by the commissioners who will decide what applications will be funded.

Commissioners will take official action in the matter at their Oct. 20 meeting. The overall application must be filed with the state Department of Community and Economic Development by Oct. 30.