

Town of Bennington
KENO PUBLIC HEARING

February 21, 2023 - 6:15 PM

Motion by Chairman Cleary to open the public hearing at 6:15 pm. Seconded by Selectmen Foster and James.

Several residents were present for this Public Hearing. Bethany Craig, Ann Marie Wilson, John Manley, Joe MacGregor, Theresa Healy, State Rep., Riche Colcombe, Monadnock Ledger – Transcript, Rowan Wilson.

Chairman Cleary introduced Maura McMann from the NH Lottery Commission who after a brief introduction proceeded to discuss KENO, NH Lottery and more.

McMann discussed that in 2017 it was voted to have the NH Lottery sales fully fund Kindergarten, however legislation changed and education only received 100% of the profits from the sale of lottery.

NH Lottery was voted on in 1964, voters were to determine the disbursements of the commissions, it passed 3-1. Keno registration was similar. 91 cities/towns in NH have approved the new legislation to expand the sale of Keno at convenience stores. Originally, bars and restaurants were the only location for the sale of this lottery game. The caveat with convenience stores, the town needs approval of the voters, similar to scratch tickets, lottery tickets etc. Keno runs from 11:00 am – 1:00 am, Monday – Sunday, there is a draw every 5 minutes. The approval of Keno in convenience stores in Bennington will bring more foot traffic to town, which will bring more sales for the owner of the convenience stores.

McMann continued with the explanation of the self-serve, validation of the tickets in bars and restaurants vs. the sale of Keno machines in convenience stores. While at a restaurant, users can cash in at the terminal at the time of winning, Convenience Stores sell and it works the same as Powerball & lottery with no self-service options. The funds from the winning that go to the owner for sales commissions are .05 cents on a dollar winning lottery and .08 cents on Keno winnings. This money can be used for employees and/or improvements to their stores. To date, 2023 has brought in \$33,000,000 with .20 cents per sale from Keno earmarked for education in NH. In 2022 there was \$146,000,000 of which \$10 - \$12 Million came from Keno.

Selectman James asked McMann how is the money disbursed?

McMann replied that it is up to the State Education Department to determine what school districts receive. There is a formula and the details can be found on the State Education website.

Resident, Joe McGregor asked if the funds must be allocated for public education, and is Keno similar to other lottery games?

McMann said legislature passed (it is a law), that the funds must go to public education and Keno disbursements are similar to the other lottery games.

Resident, John Manley commented that gambling is contentious, is that why towns have to vote on it? How do you allocate resources for those who cannot really afford to be gambling?

McMann responded there is a fund for those with gambling problems. However, the State will not guarantee any help with financial hardships. Currently, there is \$100,000.00 in the State budget for gambling addiction help. 2023/2024 budget has requested \$250,000. There is help if those needing it seek it. There is also a 24/7 hotline, the NH Lottery does have a social responsibility and are very aware of the need of assistance for some people.

Resident, Bethany Craig asked if this article passes in March, is it approving for any business in town or just Harris'?

McMann said it would be approved for any business, however the restaurant or the VFW would have to have a special license.

Bethany Craig followed up with if this is determined in 5 years to be a bad decision can the vote be rescinded?

McMann replied that she would have to get back to us with that answer, no town or city has ever rescinded the vote. She further commented that there is evidence that this game does increase revenues for convenience stores as well as, bars and restaurants.

Lengthy discussion followed on the safety, potential for problem gambling, funding for education differences depending on lottery games and more.

Resident, John Manley brought up sports betting via apps on phones.

McMann indicated that legislation would have to vote and towns would have to approve it, similar to Keno. To date only Draft Kings is in NH for sports betting.

There was no further comment or questions regarding Keno.

With nothing further, Chairman Cleary adjourned the public hearing at 7:00pm.
Seconded by Selectmen Foster and James.

Respectfully submitted,



Debra Davidson, Town Administrator