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Casino Related Impacts on Preston, CT

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Introduction

The Town of Preston has changed dramatically since the evolution and expansion of Indian Gaming in our area. Preston is sandwiched between two of the world's largest casinos. The financial and social impacts of this development are overwhelming. Every department within our town has been affected by this development. Some of these impacts can be measured quantitatively in dollars and cents, while others are much harder to put a dollar value on. The loss of our rural character is a loss no amount of financial remuneration can compensate. The social costs of our changing demographics are not measurable in dollars. For example, Preston historically has had few of the "big city" social problems such as welfare, drugs, crime and families requiring social services. We are seeing a trend toward a substantial increase in the occurrence of these types of problems. The effect the uncertain expansion plans of the Mohegan and Pequot Tribes have on Preston residents has a dramatic impact that cannot be defined in dollars and cents. The financial expense of fighting to protect our town's land from annexation has amounted to over \$400,000.

The following pages will attempt to outline some of the financial impacts that Preston has experienced since the development of Foxwoods and the Mohegan Sun. This list does not include many of the less tangible impacts. Dollar values have not been established for the social, educational and quality of life impacts residents of Preston have experienced since the opening of the casinos.

Emergency Services

Fire and Ambulance:

Fire and Ambulance departments are probably the most impacted departments due to casino development. Preston currently operates two volunteer fire and one volunteer ambulance departments. While our town population has not grown since 1988 the number of medical emergency calls has grown from 204 calls in 1988 to 955 emergency call in 1996. These numbers continue to escalate with the additional impact that the Mohegan Sun has had on traffic volume in Preston. Due to this increase demand for services additional fire trucks and ambulances have been purchased at cost of \$677,500. The annual cost incurred by the taxpayers of Preston of this additional equipment is \$88,000. Our fire and ambulance departments expend approximately \$70,000 annually for supplies and maintenance. Allocating these costs evenly, the impact created by casino traffic is conservatively \$71,500 annually.

Our volunteer departments are so overworked that retention and recruitment of volunteers has become a problem. An incentive program has been implemented at a cost of approximately \$60,000 annually. Demand for service is at a level that at least four full time emergency responders should be hired. The administrative burden of operating such active departments necessitates the hiring of at least one full time administrator.

Police Protection:

Preston has historically has participated in the resident state trooper program. We have added a trooper and currently utilize two troopers for our local police protection. With the increase in traffic on our local roads during all hours of the day and night, we need to expand this service to at least four troopers. This increase will not even bring us to a level of protection and security that we enjoyed before the arrival of casinos. The cost for this increase in service would be \$120,000 annually.

Public Works

After our emergency service providers, our public works department has experienced the greatest impact from the development of Indian casinos. In addition to needed infrastructure improvements, increased traffic volume has increased our road maintenance budget. Litter, snow removal and road maintenance cost have all increased since the opening of Foxwoods and the Mohegan Sun. Two employees have been added to the public works department within the last two years and at least two more are needed. Additional public works equipment is needed to meet current demand for services. Prior to the opening of the casinos, four miles of local Preston roads were chip sealed each year. Currently we must resurface at least eight miles of roads annually to keep up with wear and tear at the additional expense of \$36,000 annually. Due to the 24-hour a day operation of the casinos and the traffic generated by the casinos patrons and employees road maintenance costs have increased. In the past, little plowing or salting was necessary during off peak hours. Now that our roads are busy all hours of the day and night we must operate maintenance crews around the clock at an annual increase in cost of at least \$30,000. Traffic control to protect maintenance crews has increased due to the increased speed and volume of vehicles using local roads. The annual electric cost for intersection street lighting is \$10,000.

General Government Administration

All areas of general government administration have experienced negative financial impacts caused by the success of local Indian gaming. Probably the most affected are our land use boards and commissions. Some of the financial impacts are:

- The hiring of a part time planner at a cost of \$31,000 per year. This is an increase of \$23,000 over previous cost for this service.
- We are currently expending \$60,000 annually for legal services to defend the town from future expansion of trust lands.
- Legal expenses to support of our land use boards and commissions have increased by \$15,000 annually.
- Increases in administrative staffing to provide for the additional workload incurred by all administrative departments will cost at least \$25,000 dollars annually.

One Time Impacts

The increase in traffic created by Foxwoods and Mohegan Sun on Preston local roadways necessitates several infrastructure improvements. Casino employees and patrons routinely use approximately fifteen miles of Preston's local roads as shortcuts or traffic avoidance.

The volume on these roads has more than quadrupled since the opening of the casinos.

These roads must be upgraded to provide a safe environment for our residents, casino employees, and casino customers. The cost of these improvements will be approximately \$80,000 per mile or \$1,200,000.

Traffic volumes have become so great that making turns onto local roadways has become very dangerous. In an attempt to increase safety on our roads streetlights have been installed at all intersections. The cost for these improvements is approximately \$30,000.

Another improvement needed because of traffic congestion is the installation of pre-empters on all traffic signals. Intersections have become very dangerous and congested for emergency personnel to respond to emergencies in a safe and timely manner. The cost for these improvements is approximately \$180,000.

The impact that increased traffic has had on home values in Preston is dramatic. A recent revaluation of properties in Preston has shown home values for properties within a quarter mile of state roads are as much as twenty percent lower than a similar home that is not close to the traffic to the casinos. The financial impact for Preston homeowners is approximately \$6,000,000.

Summary of Impacts

Emergency Services:

Fire & Ambulance:

Fire Trucks & Ambulances (\$677,500) \$ 88,000*1/2	\$ 44,000
Maintenance & Supplies (\$55,000*1/2)	27,500
Incentive Program	60,000
EMS Staff (4 @ \$35,000 plus benefits)	196,000
Add'l Administrative Staff (1 @ \$25,000 plus benefits)	35,000

Police:

Resident State Troopers (2 @ \$60,000)	<u>\$120,000</u>
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Sub Total

\$482,500

Public Works:

Public Works Employees (3 @ \$22,500 plus benefits)	\$ 94,000
Trucks & Equipment (\$120,000 Total)	20,000
Chip Sealing (4miles @ \$9,000/mile)	36,000
Snow & Ice Removal (Add'l Salt & Sand)	15,000
Street Lighting Electric	<u>10,000</u>

Sub Total

\$175,000

General Government Administration:

Planner (\$35,000 less prior expense \$8,000)	\$ 27,000
Local Legal Selectmen's Office	25,000
Add'l Legal Land Use Boards	15,000
Add'l Administrative Staffing	<u>30,000</u>

Sub Total

\$ 97,000

TOTAL ANNUAL IMPACTS

\$754,500

One Time Impact:

Roads (15 miles @ \$80,000/mile)	\$1,200,000
Street Lighting (50 @ \$400 each)	20,000
Signal Light Pre-empters (6 @ \$30,000 each)	180,000
Home Devaluation	<u>6,000,000</u>

TOTAL ONE TIME IMPACT

\$7,400,000