

Wireless Gambling Company Gets Endorsement From Nevada Regulators

Las Vegas (AP) – The company that led a 2005 legislative effort to allow wireless gambling in Nevada won a recommendation Wednesday from regulators for licensing needed to market its hand-held, mobile gambling devices in the state.

The state Gaming Control Board recommended Cantor Gaming as the state's first licensed manufacturer and distributor of the devices. The board's parent state Gaming Commission will have final say on the licensing at a May 18 meeting.

The board endorsed Cantor after Joe Asher, managing director and vice president of the company, said Cantor is ready to invest „significant“ capital to install mobile gambling systems in Nevada hotel-casinos.

Asher also said the devices should attract gamblers in their 20s and early 30s who have grown up with video games, cell phones and other devices, as well as older gamblers who use such technology.

Regulations passed in March, based on the 2005 legislation, made Nevada the first in the nation to approve use of handheld devices for gambling in any public area of the state's casinos, such as restaurants and poolsides.

Rules allow a range of games, including bingo, poker, blackjack and horse race betting. Use of the devices in hotel rooms and other places that can't be supervised is prohibited.

Advocates say the move will better use resort space that is increasingly being devoted to non-gambling activities, such as shopping, dining and clubbing.

But they admit it's not likely to lead to the lucrative world of Internet betting, which is barred by state and federal law.

Major players Harrah's Entertainment Inc. and MGM Mirage Inc. and neighborhood casino operator Station Casinos Inc. say they are taking a wait-and-see approach as the regulations and the technology evolve.

Boyd Gaming Corp., whose holdings include the Stardust in Las Vegas and co-ownership in the Borgata in Atlantic City, N.J., has said it is unsure about demand for hand-held gadgets, despite having electronic bingo devices at halls in its Las Vegas properties.

Cantor G&W (Nevada) LP is an affiliate of Cantor Fitzgerald, the New York-based financial services company. It plans to use bond-trading technology, which has been used for mobile gambling devices in Britain since September 2003.

Others interested in the technology include Louisiana-based Diamond I Inc., which has developed its own device; Reno-based International Game Technology, the world's largest manufacturer of slot machines; and FortuNet Inc., a Las Vegas-based gambling device manufacturer.

Manufacturers say biometric fingerprint readers and regulations limiting use to public areas will keep devices out of the hands of minors.