

Exhibit IX.A.5 – School Population

Submit as Exhibit IX.A.5. an assessment of the likely impact on school populations in the Host Municipality and nearby municipalities resulting from new jobs the Gaming Facility provides, and the Applicant’s plans and commitments to remedy or mitigate any negative impacts. Provide copies of any contracts, agreements or other understandings evidencing such mitigation commitments.

Public School Trends

Over the past decade enrollment at public schools in the host municipality and nearby municipalities has been trending downward. As the table below illustrates, with the single exception of Rensselaer City, school districts in the local area have experienced a marked decline in student populations.

Rensselaer County Public School Enrollment

Public School Districts*	Number of Students					
(with peak year since 1993)	1995	2000	Peak	2010	2020 (projected)	Change from peak to 2020
Averill Park (2003)	3,269	3,479	3,534	3,333	3,024	-14%
Berlin (1998)	1,119	1,109	1,163	841	718	-38%
Brunswick (1995)	1,436	1,399	1,436	1,306	1,256	-13%
East Greenbush (1997)	4,547	4,544	4,679	4,328	4,343	-7%
Hoosic Valley (1995)	1,304	1,229	1,304	1,128	968	-26%
Hoosick Falls (1996)	1,452	1,265	1,473	1,199	1,108	-25%
Lansingburgh (2005)	2,235	2,299	2,534	2,382	2,347	-7%
Rensselaer City (1996)	1,041	1,042	1,126	1,018	1,240	10%
Schodack (2000)	1,166	1,253	1,253	1,044	928	-11%
Troy (2002)	4,733	4,858	4,902	3,939	3,789	-23%
Totals	22,302		23,404	20,518	19,721	-16%

Source: Cornell University Program on Applied Demographics

Interviews with Education Administrators

Angela Nagle, superintendent of East Greenbush schools, told us in an interview, that a casino in East Greenbush would benefit her school district of 4,600 students.

She sees it as a boost to the region’s sluggish economy. People would be able to find jobs or find better jobs with higher salaries than they currently earn, Nagle said.

East Greenbush is operating under capacity so it could easily absorb additional students that might result from a new casino. The board of education considered but rejected a plan last year to close one of the district’s five elementary schools.

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"We have seven empty classrooms," Nagle explained, noting that the problem of shrinking enrollment is only getting worse.

People move out, Nagle said, because they cannot find suitable employment.

Nagle is hopeful that some of funds that are provided to East Greenbush as a result of it being a host community will find its way to the school district. One problem, she said, that needs to be addressed is traffic.

Declining enrollments are occurring throughout New York State. School districts have often had to shutter schools to save money as class sizes are too small to keep schools open. And according to projections through 2020, the problem is expected to only get worse.

From its peak enrollment of 23,404 in the late 1990s, Rensselaer County school districts have sustained an overall decline in student enrollment of 8% from 2000 to 2010. In 2020, the enrollment decline is expected to fall to 16% from the peak.

We reviewed projected declines for Rensselaer County school districts with enrollments in excess of 500 students. The decline was from their peak enrollment. The following declines are expected by the year 2020:

Berlin, 38 percent; Hoosic Valley, 26%; Hoosick Falls, 25%; Troy, 23%; Averill Park, 14%; Brunswick, 13%; Schodack, 11% and Lansingburgh and East Greenbush, 7%. Only one district is expected to show an increase from its peak enrollment in the year 2020; Rensselaer at 10%.

Robert Horan, superintendent of schools for the Schodack district, said he, too, would welcome a casino in nearby East Greenbush.

"The declining enrollment phenomenon has left most of us with a lot of capacity," he noted. "A casino in the area with thousands of new jobs would give us a chance to get more students into our classrooms."

According to Horan, the district has a middle school for grades 3-6 that is at just 32% of occupancy. The district expects to close that school and rent it out possibly to a YMCA to run as a day-care center. As recently as 2009, there were 528 students at the school compared to the current enrollment of 248, he said.

If more families moved into the district, Horan said the lease could be terminated and the building used once again as a school.

"We plan to keep our options open," he said.

The region could really use a new tax ratable, Horan said, adding that some of that casino revenue would hopefully be used to help area school districts.

Averill Park Superintendent James Hoffman said his district has had to close two schools; one is sold and another is leased out. Hoffman said a new casino could negatively impact his district since his schools are now operating at 90% of capacity.



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“With the consolidation, we don’t have that much room now and it could be expensive to add capacity if we needed to, he noted. He expects his district to feel the impacts of a new casino as the Averill Park district extends into a section of East Greenbush, the site of the new casino.

Hoffman noted that his district as well as others would very much benefit from the spin-off development that would occur as a result of a destination casino coming to the region. The area desperately needs to see some commercial development as the tax rate is so high that it prevents some families from buying homes in the region.

James Baldwin is the district superintendent for Rensselaer, Columbia and Greene counties. He represents the state commissioner of education. He is the CEO for the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) for the three counties. The BOCES operates a vocational school and adult education program for the region.

Baldwin expressed concern that the impacts on schools would most likely extend far beyond the confines of the host community, East Greenbush. He said it is important that the outlying districts receive some compensation for impacts that are likely to affect them as he believes that the bulk of additional enrollment would occur in communities outside East Greenbush. Housing, he noted, is more affordable there.

As for declining enrollment, he noted that 85 percent of the cost of educating students lies in staffing. Additional students, he noted, will result in additional staff, and that is where the real cost is in education, he said.

Cynthia DeDemonick is the superintendent of the Lansingburgh school district in Rensselaer County. Her district has actually seen an increase in enrollment of 4% from 2000 to 2010.

Despite that fact, she said a casino in nearby East Greenbush would be a positive development for her district as far too many families have incomes that are near or below the poverty level. “This project would give many of them an opportunity to improve themselves,” she noted.

DeDemonick said that if there were an enrollment increase, the district could absorb it as it is at 80% of capacity.

Based on our review of the impact of Foxwoods and Mohegan Sun on Connecticut school districts adjacent to the casinos, it is possible that the districts might experience a demographic shift in enrollment, which could negatively impact their budgets. We would not expect enrollment to significantly increase.

The Norwich Public School District, for example, actually saw enrollment decline from 2003 to 2008 but had to devote significant resources to its “English for Speakers of Other Language” program. In 2008, it spent more than \$2 million on ESOL, a program that didn’t exist prior to the casinos opening. In the 2007-2008 school year, 289 students or 7 percent of the enrollment were Asian-Americans. That is four times the figure for the 1993-1994 school year.

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Clearly, the impacts on ESOL programs in the greater Albany area will be much less than it was in Norwich, Ct. as the casino planned for East Greenbush is much smaller than Foxwoods and Mohegan Sun. Nonetheless, there could be a moderate fiscal impact depending on what percent of employees the casino owner hires from within the region. We believe that it would be prudent to expect districts with affordable housing to hire additional staff to work with students who are not proficient in the English language. We estimate that school districts in the Capital region would have to hire three additional teachers. It would be too speculative to suggest exactly what districts would be affected. With benefits, the cost for those three employees could be as much as \$210,000 a year.

