

South Shore attorney buys Bill's Casino for \$5.22 mil.

By Kathryn Reed

South Shore attorney Mike Laub paid Harrah's Entertainment \$5.225 million for the five parcels that encompass Bill's Casino at Stateline.

The sale went through Friday.



Bill's is gone; what the new business name will be remains to be seen.

Bill's ceased being a casino Jan. 4. It was a slots only gaming facility for the past few years. Named after Harrah's founder Bill Harrah, the small club nestled on the east edge of Harrah's Lake Tahoe was a draw for locals and tourists in its heyday. People used to spill out onto the sidewalks because it didn't have traditional doors.

Like so much of the gaming industry in Northern Nevada, but especially in Lake Tahoe, the influx of Indian casinos throughout California has been debilitating.

Laub, who has a Glenbrook mailing address, has spoken with

Douglas County officials about putting a strip club in where the casino was.

It's zoned for such a business.

Douglas County Manager Michael Brown said Laub has not submitted any plans to the county.

Brown said the county, including the elected commissioners, have jurisdiction over land use issues but cannot deny a business the right to operate just because they may not like the type of establishment.

Commission Chairwoman Nancy McDermid did not return phone calls.

Laub did not return phone calls Monday either. Jacqueline Peterson with Harrah's Entertainment in Las Vegas said, "I don't imagine we're commenting" when asked what the company thought of potentially having a strip club steps from its Harrah's Lake Tahoe and Harvey's properties.

Even though Harrah's and MontBleu have nightclubs inside the casinos, access to them is only from inside the casino. Scantily clad women have been part of their lineup at times, but never have they operated what would be called a strip club.

"We are opposed to it," Mike Donovan, spokesman for MontBleu, said of a strip club moving in next door. "I don't think it's good for the overall market place. An element like that taints the cleanliness of the Lake Tahoe market just a bit. I think it will hurt other aspects of the Lake Tahoe market."

Lakeside Inn and Casino as well as the Gaming Alliance are also opposed to this type of business going in.

"Douglas County commissioners will hear an overwhelming weight of opposition to this not for moral reasons, but purely for economic development reasons," Mike Bradford, president of

Lakeside Inn, said. "Edgewood Companies is working on a proposal that would turn Horizon into some completely different kind of facility. With a strip club across the street, it would be a disincentive to do that."

Edgewood Companies officials didn't return calls. The Minden-based company owns the property Horizon and MontBleu are on as well as the Edgewood Tahoe Golf Course.

Bradford acknowledged that gaming is taking a backseat to the outdoors and that something more inline with what he envisions for the future of the South Shore should occupy the Bill's property to better complement where the area is going, not where it has been.

No one from Horizon or Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority returned calls.