

Published May 14, 2008 08:01 pm - FRONTENAC, Kan. — Phil Ruffin Sr., owner of Camptown Greyhound Park, said he scuttled plans to reopen the track after he determined that state requirements would make it too difficult to turn a profit.

Owner explains decision to keep track closed

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FRONTENAC, Kan. — Phil Ruffin Sr., owner of Camptown Greyhound Park, said he scuttled plans to reopen the track after he determined that state requirements would make it too difficult to turn a profit.

“It didn’t really work,” Ruffin said by phone last week.

Ruffin walked away Friday, May 2, from negotiations to reopen the track with 600 slot machines, according to Sally Lunsford, spokeswoman for the Kansas Lottery Commission.

“It can’t be reopened,” Ruffin said.

He said he was planning to invest \$25 million to upgrade the building and \$12 million on slot machines.

The track had closed for a second time in 2000.

Ruffin said the state would have allowed the operation to keep 15 percent of its revenues for operating expenses, but that wasn’t enough to make a profit. He said he would have required at least 25 percent for operating expenses.

He also said that though the slots were to be owned and operated by the state, he was paying for them.

The law allowing state-owned casinos required the so-called “racino” to share 40 percent of slot-machine revenue with the state, 1 percent of revenues with the city of Frontenac, 1 percent with Crawford County, 1 percent with Cherokee County, and 2 percent with a fund for problem gamblers.

“You have two other issues,” Ruffin said, listing the casino and hotel being built by the Quapaw Tribe of Oklahoma in Ottawa County, Okla., and the planned Penn National Gaming casino in Cherokee County.

Ruffin said both would be paying a much smaller share of their revenues than he would at Camptown.

“You’re talking about three casinos in that one area. It would be tough,” Ruffin said.

He said he understands that many in Crawford County are disappointed or angry about his decision. He said it was strictly a financial one.

“To make an investment of that kind would be tough,” he said.

Only chance

Phil Ruffin Sr., owner of Camptown Greyhound Park in Frontenac, said the only chance that it could reopen is if the Kansas Legislature were to change the law regarding racetracks with slot machines.