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## Harrah's still backs Miss. Margaritaville project

*(Published May 07, 2009)*

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BILOXI, Miss. — The Harrah's Entertainment partnership with Jimmy Buffett for construction of a Margaritaville Casino & Resort on the beach in Biloxi remains an important project, the company's central division chief said.

But John Payne said check back with him in six to nine months and he may have a better idea when construction will resume.

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"The core of Margaritaville is going to be and what we announced is still there," Payne said in an interview with Biloxi television station WLOX on Wednesday during the Southern Gaming Summit.

Las Vegas-based Harrah's announced the \$700 million project in 2007. Buffett, a Pascagoula, Miss., native known for his lazy-day beach songs such as "Margaritaville" and "Cheeseburger in Paradise," was one of the resort's backers.

The project had been expected to be finished in early 2010 but was put on hold last year. Payne has no idea when construction may resume.

"So to your question about time frame, we just have to wait and see."

"Unfortunately we've had to downsize the business, as many have in the Biloxi market to match the staffing levels to the volumes we now see," Payne said.

Payne said Harrah's remains committed to its Biloxi resort, and to the people who work there.

"There's still a great opportunity to build a world class facility there," said Payne. "The question is when do the markets open. When is the right time to do it?"



"We love the project. We love the location. It's a matter of what are the new financing for it. And we continue to work on that."

The original Margaritaville design included a hotel, a casino, and retail shops all on the southern, beachfront side of U.S. Highway 90. Payne said he couldn't say if the project would be scaled back.


**Information from: WLOX-TV, <http://www.wlox.com>**

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