

Virginia City saloon owner denied gambling license

By Kimberly Pierceall, AP

A California man who bought two saloon casinos in Virginia City will be forced to sell them after Nevada regulators said he was unfit to be involved in the state's gambling industry.

The Nevada Gaming Commission unanimously denied Vincent Michael Malfitano a license Thursday and barred him from being the casinos' landlord.

The small casinos that employ 25 people aren't expected to be closed immediately, and the commission left open the possibility that Malfitano and his casino manager could come to a short-term arrangement by the agency's next meeting to keep the doors open, allowing Malfitano time to find a buyer.

Casino manager Bruce Dewing, with Dewing Gaming, said they would make every effort to keep the saloons open.

"They're the heart and soul of Virginia City," he told commissioners of the two casinos and its employees, urging them to keep the properties open.

Malfitano said after the hours-long meeting that the commission made the wrong decision. He told commissioners he was dismayed that his integrity was questioned.

"That's difficult to listen to," he said.

He bought the Delta Saloon and Bonanza Saloon in October 2014.

Commission members said it was an issue of character, integrity and honesty as well as Malfitano's business acumen.

Malfitano, a former dentist, owns Cypress Meadows Assisted

Living in Antioch.

The commission took issue with Malfitano's omission of several lawsuits against him and a citation when he was handcuffed by police during an argument at his assisted living business with the spouse of a former employee.

Commission members were also concerned with Malfitano's handling of finances in past business dealings and his casino loan.

His attorney argued Malfitano was not a criminal.

Gaming Commission Chair Tony Alamo argued that criminal behavior was not a requirement for denial.

"I don't want you anywhere near gaming," Commissioner John Moran said.

The commission unanimously affirmed an earlier Gaming Control Board recommendation.

"There is a reason why the most grueling and painful process you can go through is to get a gaming license in Nevada," Commissioner Pat Mulroy said.