

**Gaming (Continued)**

But we also realized that the future of gaming was uncertain. So we planned that our gaming revenues would be used to meet our immediate tribal and community needs, but also that a portion of gaming revenues should be invested to meet future needs.

We reminded our tribal members that "the planning phase of this project will be long and difficult..." and advised that as with other economic development projects, some aspects of the project must not be too widely publicized such as the identification of potential sites."

We assured our members that we would provide as much information as we could, as the planning progressed. We have kept that promise through these monthly newsletters, and in our Council and community meetings.

**THE AD HOC GAMING COMMISSION IS ESTABLISHED AND CONSULTANTS RECRUITED.**

In November, 1991, an Ad Hoc Gaming Commission was established with Jessie Davis as chairman. Others named were Dee Pigsley, the Tribal Chairman, Nelsen Witt, CEO, and Craig Dorsay, tribal attorney. Subsequently, two council members were added to the Commission making a total of five. Present and past council members Frank Simmons, Jane John, Lillie Butler and Phil Rilatos have served as Commission members.

Because we knew that securing a site and establishing a gaming center would be a complex process, Forrest Gerard, former Assistant Secretary of the Interior, was contracted to advise us on strategies involving congressional and Department of Interior issues. Later, at Gerard's recommendation, Lou Gallegos, who had formerly served as assistant to Secretary Lujan, was hired as a tribal consultant.

Cogan, Sharpe and Cogan, a Portland based public relations firm was hired to assist the Tribe to deal with political issues which we knew we would encounter in establishing a gaming center outside Siletz. CSC was later replaced by Conklin, Fiskum and McCormick.

**INITIAL FINANCING OF GAMING PROJECT**

The Tribal Council committed tribal timber revenues in the amount of \$25,000 and secured a BIA technical assistance grant in the amount of \$15,000 to initiate the project.

The Council also entered into an agreement with First Astri, a development company involved at the time with the management of the Sycuan Casino near San Diego. First Astri agreed to assist the Tribe with the initial planning and to completely fund the development phase in exchange for consideration as the management company for the facility.

**TRIBE INFORMS CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVES OF GAMING PLANS**

As one of our first action steps, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman met with Governor Roberts, our congressional representatives, Senators Hatfield and Packwood, and representatives Kopetski, Defazio and Wyden to inform them of the Tribe's gaming plans. They also hosted an Oregon Tribes meeting in Siletz to let the rest of the tribes know their intent.

**REASONS FOR SEARCH OUTSIDE SILETZ**

The Tribe's land base was extremely limited: 37 parcels of virtually inaccessible, steeply wooded reservation timberland totalling 3,633 acres and 39 acres in the town of Siletz entirely occupied or already committed for other tribal uses.

Because no suitable reservation land was available for gaming, it was the consensus of the Tribal Council that we should search for land in the Willamette valley, which

was in the Tribe's aboriginal area and considered to be the most economically viable. Realtors were recruited to assist in the search.

**PROPERTY ADJACENT TO THE CITY OF DONALD SELECTED**

The rural, economically depressed city of Donald, between Portland and Salem, was selected as the first potential site and an option taken on the property. Donald was selected because it was close to portland but rural, and we hoped the site would not raise opposition from urban centers.

The Tribe encountered active opposition from what we considered to be the vocal minority, mainly anti-gaming and anti-Indian elements outside Donald.

Our decision to drop Donald was not, however, caused by this opposition. The Mayor and City Council were completely supportive of the Tribe's proposed gaming center. The reason the site was dropped was because it was just outside the city's urban growth boundary. While the city assured us that expansion of the UGB to include the site was only a technicality, it became clear to us after consulting with experts that approval of a UGB expansion would be a long, difficult process and could be tied up in the court for years.

We were aware that anywhere we decided to go outside Siletz, we were bound to encounter opposition.

In the February, 1992 issue of the Newsletter, we said: "The Siletz Tribe intends to pursue its sovereign rights under the law and will continue to pursue suitable locations within the 11 County Service Area to establish our gaming center. Our final objective remains the same."

**NORTH SALEM PROPERTY OPTION SIGNED**

Applying criteria we had developed in February of 1992 for the evaluation and selection of potential sites, the Tribal Council selected from a list of nine sites, a 20 acre parcel in North Salem.

The site was in the Tribe's aboriginal territory and within our federally recognized 11 County Service Area. Furthermore, the Tribe had an active community outreach office in Salem long before Restoration. The ties to the region were strong.

We signed an option on the 20 acre parcel in April of 1992. We also considered a site in South Salem near the Salem airport, but decided to concentrate on the North Salem site as the primary focus of our efforts.

**FEE-TO-TRUST ON THE NORTH SALEM SITE REQUESTED**

In a letter dated March 10, 1992, the Tribe requested the Secretary of the Interior to take the Salem property into trust. Triggered by that request, the Agency Superintendent sent letters to the city, county and the state informing them of the Tribe's plan and soliciting their comments.

On March 23, 1992, the Tribe presented the plans to the Salem City Council, and responded to the concerns of the City Council and the community.

The Tribal Council presentation included a brief historical sketch of the Tribe and a description of the Tribe's proposed gaming center; the legal basis for Indian gaming; the myth of criminal infiltration; and benefits to the community.

Not surprisingly, the hard core opponents of Indian gaming spoke in opposition to the project expressing the usual unfounded arguments about alcohol, drugs, traffic, crime and prostitution. When the vote was finally taken, the City Council split on the issue, and by a 5 to 4 vote, voted to support the community opposition to the Tribe's proposal in Salem.