

Tribes host meeting on Gorge casino plan

Tribal Council members and other officials of the Confederated Tribes met this week with about 30 people from the Hood River area.

The people from Hood River included county commissioners, city officials from Cascade Locks and Hood River, representatives of Friends of the Gorge, among others. A representative of Gov. Kitzhaber's office was also on hand.

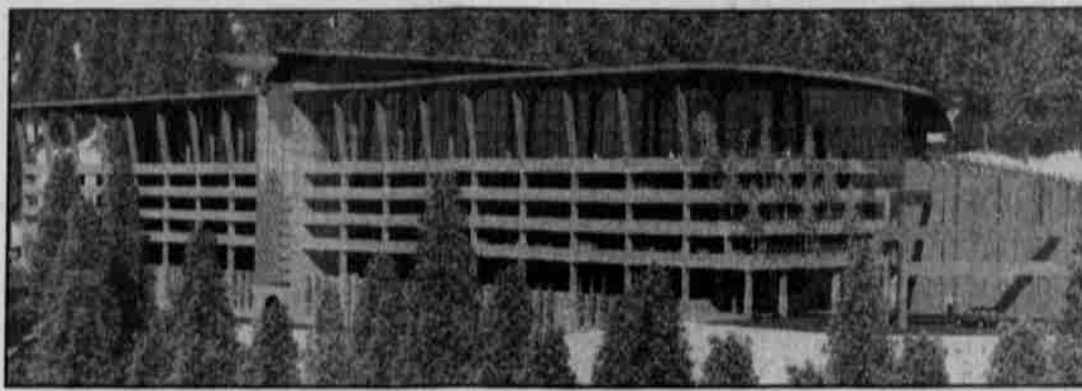
The group met Wednesday morning at Kah-Nee-Ta, and then toured the reservation during the afternoon.

At the conclusion of the morning

meeting, those present — about 50 people in all — agreed to continue discussions on the issue of location of the tribes' new casino. Future talks may involve a professional facilitator.

The mayor of Cascade Locks again stated that his town would welcome a casino at Government Rock.

This option re-



Courtesy of the tribes' gaming committee

mains unviable, as Kitzhaber has given no indication that he will change his mind regarding Cascade Locks, said Carol York, Hood River county commissioner.

Above is a conceptual drawing of the casino proposed for trust property east of Hood River.

Candidate in favor of Cascade Locks gaming site

Jack Roberts, candidate for the Republican nomination for governor, stated his support last week for a tribal casino at Cascade Locks, rather than at Hood River.

"I've heard from many people in the Gorge who are not happy with the governor's decision (blocking a casino at Cascade Locks)," said Roberts. "To me, Cascade Locks is the logical choice between the two."

Roberts met at Kah-Nee-Ta last week with Paiute Chief Joe Moses, Tribal Councilman Raymond Tsumpti, and Kah-Nee-Ta board chairman Rudy Clements.

Also at the meeting were Indian Head manager Jeff Ford, tribal attorney Dennis Karnopp, and lobbyists Michael Mason and Greg Leo.

In talking with Roberts, Councilman Tsumpti brought up the subject of the 1865 treaty, which was an attempt by the federal government to restrict tribal rights established in the Treaty of 1855.

The 1865 treaty has never been en-

forced, but it remains in theory a potential problem for the tribes. With the help of federal and state lawmakers, the Confederated Tribes would like to have the 1865 treaty nullified.

Roberts said he would be in favor of helping do away with the treaty. "It was a black mark on history," Roberts commented.

Tsumpti also brought up the issue of fishing rights and fisheries. Roberts indicated a support for the work that is being done by hatcheries.

Regarding the casino question — Hood River versus Cascade Locks — it is not clear whether Robert's position in favor of Cascade Locks can make any difference.



Jack Roberts

The new governor will take office in January of 2003, and the tribal membership by then may already have decided upon an alternative.

Cascade Locks is presently not a casino option for the Confederated Tribes because of Kitzhaber's opposition.

The governor cannot, however, block development at Hood River, where the tribes have been focusing for gaming expansion.

At the same time a group of federal and state lawmakers, and local officials and residents of Hood River County are planning a final lobbying effort aimed at convincing Kitzhaber to change his mind in favor of Cascade Locks.

Jack Roberts is the second candidate

seeking the Republican nomination for governor to endorse the Cascade Locks site. Earlier this summer, candidate Ron Saxton also endorsed this site.

The likely candidate for the Democratic nomination for governor is Ted Kulongoski, Oregon Attorney General, who has not yet met with tribal officials to discuss the casino matter.

A meeting with Kulongoski likely will happen in the fairly near future, said Rudy Clements.

Jack Roberts is currently serving his second term as Oregon's Commissioner of Labor and Industries. In his 1998 reelection, he earned 60 percent of the vote, carrying every county in the state.

He currently is the only Republican state official elected statewide in Oregon.

Prior to serving as Labor Commissioner, Roberts was an attorney in private practice in Eugene, where he lives.

He also served as a Lane County Commissioner for five years.

Gaming expansion: on vs. off reservation...

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People who advocate expansion in the Gorge say that from the perspective of future gaming revenue for the tribes, the argument is overwhelmingly in their favor.

Nevertheless, many tribal members are not in favor of a Gorge casino. Many people on the reservation say that if a referendum on gaming expansion to the Gorge were held today, then it would fail, or the vote would be extremely close.

Issues other than sheer volumes of money are involved, because projected revenue from a Gorge casino is much greater than projected revenue from any potential on-reservation site.

A new casino on the reservation, somewhere along Highway 26, would generate approximately \$26 million to \$26.5 million per year gross revenue.

For comparison, Indian Head at Kah-Nee-Ta generates about \$9.7 million; so a new casino along Highway 26 would be an improvement, exclusively in terms of revenue, over Indian Head.

However, revenue from either Indian Head or a casino along Highway 26 would be small compared to revenue from a casino at the Gorge, located either at Hood River or Cascade Locks.

For the Hood River site, where the Tribal Council is focusing for potential gaming expansion, the gross revenue from a casino would be close to \$114 million.

If a Cascade Locks casino were possible, such an enterprise would generate close to \$160 million, because of its proximity to Portland.

This information is from a study commissioned by Tribal Council, developed by ECONorthwest, based in Portland. The firm has extensive experience in working with Indian tribes on gaming projects, said Jeff Ford, casino manager at Kah-Nee-Ta.

The latest revenue projections of the various casino sites are based on the most recent census data, from the 2000 U.S. Census.

No one has produced a study contrary to the revenue projections that ECONorthwest has developed regarding the Confederated Tribes' different possible new casino sites.

According to the most recent data, a casino along Highway 26, generating \$26

million per year, would be less than one-quarter as profitable to the tribes as a Gorge casino, generating \$114 million.

For this reason alone the debate of off-reservation versus on-reservation is of obvious importance: Tens of millions of dollars per year — a chance at long-term economic stability and even prosperity for the Confederated Tribes — will be at stake in the gaming referendum.

No one has yet even thought of all the good ideas — new tribal business ventures with good-paying jobs — that could be funded with that kind of revenue, said Olney Patt Jr.

For individual tribal members the chance for increased per capita payments would also be much greater with a Gorge casino compared to one on reservation, said Rudy Clements, chairman of the gaming expansion committee.

Casino employment

Despite the financial incentive to build at the Gorge, a good number of tribal members would prefer development of a casino along Highway 26, perhaps in or near the town of Warm Springs, or in the HeHe area.

One of the arguments for this position is that a casino near Warm Springs would provide jobs for tribal members. It is not likely, most everyone agrees, that very many tribal members would move or commute to Hood River to work at a casino.

However, advocates of a Gorge casino say that the issue of local jobs would best be addressed through development of a casino that would generate as much profit as possible for the tribes.

The revenue from such an enterprise would be used to develop businesses and jobs that people are actually interested in pursuing, tribal officials and many members agree.

Many of the jobs at Indian Head and Kah-Nee-Ta are not the kind that people tend to keep for long periods of time, said Garland Brunoe, vice-chairman of the Tribal Council.

"Not all tribal members want to work late at night, on weekends and holidays, for wages that are hard to live on," Brunoe said of the casino employment opportunities.

A lot of the jobs at Kah-Nee-Ta, he said, are for young people just starting out in the job market, or for people who also

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Olney Patt Jr.
Council Chairman

have some other employment but want a second job.

Only about 30 percent of the employees at Kah-Nee-Ta are tribal members. In the debate over location of a new casino, Brunoe said, "The question of employment is how many tribal members really want to work at a casino."

On the other hand, with revenue from a Gorge casino, the tribes could diversify the local economy. "People could work regular hours Monday through Friday on the reservation for good wages. To me that makes good business sense," Brunoe said.

Subject can be emotional

Another reason why some tribal members may want to expand gaming on the reservation is that, like non-tribal members, they sometimes like to go to the casino.

This is not a good argument in favor of developing a Highway 26 casino rather than a much more profitable one at the Gorge, said Joe Moses, Paiute chief.

"Gaming is a means of generating revenue for the tribes," said Moses. "The purpose of gaming has never been to provide recreation for tribal members. Indian Head was not set up for the recreation of tribal members."

Gaming is a business, and its purpose is to make money for the tribes, Moses said. In focusing on Hood River, he said, "We're looking at the site that would generate the most revenue."

Councilwoman Carol Wewa said that the question of casino expansion on-reservation versus off-reservation can be an emotional one for some tribal members, and this tends to complicate the debate.

"If you just ask, which site is going to be best for the reservation and for the tribes, then the choice is obvious," Wewa said. "To me, considering the millions of dollars that a Hood River casino would

bring in, I don't see how anyone could be against it."

On the other hand, she said, if you listen just to emotional arguments from some people, then the question can become difficult, when really it should not be.

"I know we have people opposed to the Gorge site, and they speak of jobs for our tribal members," Wewa said. "I'm concerned that not many tribal members are holding onto their jobs very long at Kah-Nee-Ta. I commend the people who have held onto their jobs and have continued providing for their families," she said.

Wewa said, "I have not heard anyone offer an alternative better than Hood River. The people who are opposed don't offer solutions. They believe a Warm Springs site would be better but they don't really say why."

She said that she would like to see the people who represent gaming expansion meet at small family gatherings. These meetings would be in addition to the district and general council meetings that are to happen prior to the referendum.

In the smaller gatherings, people who might not want to speak or ask questions at a district meeting would be more inclined to speak up, Wewa said. "I think all people need to be heard, not just the few vocal ones."

Tribal Councilman Ron Suppah said that, as of right now, the weak link in the gaming expansion plan is the lack of support among many tribal members for a Gorge casino.

"In order to win approval, we'll have to do a better job at communicating with the people," said Suppah.

A Gorge casino, he said, "would be a big moneymaker and I have nothing against that. But we're forgetting something," he said of the lack of involvement, so far at least, from a large part of the tribal membership.

Between now and the planned spring referendum, supporters of gaming expansion in the Gorge will be working to provide as much information on the subject as possible to the tribal members.

"We don't tell the members how to vote," said Tribal Council Chairman Patt. "Our job is to create the best possible option in terms of revenue generation. I think it would be a dereliction of our duty to recommend an option that would create so much less revenue than Hood River."

Financial literacy classes offered by business center

The Small Business Development Center is sponsoring ONABEN Financial Literacy classes.

Whether you want to start a business, buy a home, or pay off your debt, personal financial literacy is a first step to gaining control over your financial future. The series runs for six weeks. Classes will be held at the SBDC from 6-9 p.m. on the following dates: Wednesday, Sept. 18; Tuesday, Sept. 25; Tuesday, Oct. 2; Tuesday, Oct. 9; Wednesday, Oct. 17; Tuesday, Oct. 23.

For more information or to register, please contact the SBDC at 553-3592.

Onaben will offer a two-week series of classes designed to discover tribal and local entrepreneurs and encourage the development of their business ideas beyond just an idea. This series will begin September 20 from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at a cost of \$10.00.

Following this two-week series will be a ten-week series of classes called, *Starting a Successful Business*.

These classes are designed to guide participants through the process of writing a business plan. Course material and individual counseling sessions will assist in this process.

The end result is a comprehensive business plan ready for presentation to financial institution for loan consideration.

This ten-week series will be held Tuesdays from 6:00-9:00 p.m. through December 6, and Thursdays, from 6:00-9:00 p.m. thereafter. The cost for this series is \$100.00.

After successfully completing this business course tribal members will be reimbursed their tuition.

Both classes will be held at the Small Business Development Center conference room, 1134 Paiute Street, Warm Springs, OR.

Onaben will also offer a class Building Native Communities, Financial Skills for Families. This is a six-week series from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Whether you want to start a business, buy a home, or pay off your debt, personal financial literacy is a first step to gaining control over your financial future.

Come join us for food, fun and learning. Space is limited.

For information or to register call the SBDC at 553-3592/3593 or stop by.

Workshop focuses corrections jobs

A free two-part workshop on job opportunities at the state prison planned for the Madras area will be presented this month by Central Oregon Community College.

The workshop is slated for 6 to 9 p.m., Oct. 10 and 11.

Information will be presented on the variety of jobs that will be created with the coming of the prison, ground-breaking for which is scheduled for next year.

The workshop, *Careers in Corrections*, requires pre-registration. Call Madras COCC at 475-2136.

Electrical and plumbing apprentices sought

Apprenticeship COCC will be accepting applications for Electrical apprentices Oct. 1-12, 2 to 6 p.m. Accepting applications for Plumbing apprentices, Oct. 8-19, 2 to 6 p.m. Contact 504-2930 for info.