

Casino plan presented at hearings

By Dave McMechan
Spilyay Tymoo

The open house hearings on the tribes' casino proposal at Cascade Locks went well, said Ed Manion, of the casino project development team.

The purpose of the hearings was to gather comments and questions on the proposal, not to debate the issue, and the hearings were conducted with this goal in mind, Manion said.

The open houses at Cascade Locks drew attendance of between 200 and 250 people, and another 150 people showed up at the hearing in Hood River, Manion said. About half the people who showed up were in favor the proposal, and the other half against, he said. The tribal members who attended were in favor, he said.

Festival of Nations

The hearing that drew the largest tribal member attendance was the one held Saturday morning, Sept. 17, at Cascade Locks. This was the day that Cascade Locks and the tribes hosted the Festival of Nations event.

More than 100 tribal members attended the Festival of Nations Celebration, the theme of which was "Two Communities, One Vision."



Tribal Council Chairman Ron Suppah thanks community members at Cascade Locks for welcoming the tribes with the Festival of Nations, as Rodger Schock, chairman of the Hood River County Commission, listens. During the event, the mayor of Cascade Locks presented Suppah with a key to the city.

The open house gatherings were the scoping hearings in the process of developing an environmental impact statement (EIS) on the plan to bring the

Cascade Locks site into trust, leading to development of a casino. The tribes have hired the architectural, engineering and consulting firm of HDR to

produce the EIS.

Terry Buchholz, project manager for the consulting firm, said the plan is to fill 25 acres at the Cascade Locks industrial park with a 90,000-square foot casino, a 250-room hotel, a meeting facility, and parking for 3,700 cars. Buchholz said the EIS could be ready by 2006 and Interior Secretary Gale Norton could make a decision by that summer.

Manion said that issues of traffic, air quality and noise associated with the proposed casino were raised by some at the open houses. The issues, he said, will be addressed during the EIS process.

For economic reasons, he said, the city and port of Cascade Locks, and Hood River County, are in favor of the tribal proposal.

Bob Willoughby, Cascade Locks city manager, said there are striking similarities between his city and the tribe, with both suffering from poverty and high unemployment.

"We're both in the same boat," he said.

Information on the casinos is available on the Internet at the following website:

www.turninglivesaround.com.

A site dedicated to the casino EIS is: www.gorgecasinoeis.com.

(The Associated Press contributed to this article.)

New building for Credit

The Tribal Credit Department is planning the construction of a new building, to be located on the vacant field west of the Administration Building.

The plan is to construct a 10,000 square-foot building at a projected cost of about \$2 million, Lori Fuentes, Credit Department manager, said.

The building would house Tribal Credit, and, in time, could include a branch office of a bank, Fuentes said. The bank branch would lease space in the building from the tribes, she said.

A new building would allow Tribal Credit, with a staff of 11, to move from limited office space in the Administration building to a facility more suited to the services the department provides.

With more space, she said, "there is a lot more we could do, such as offering consumer credit counseling, courses in financial literacy, and new homeowner programs."

A question that is not yet answered is whether the BIA would lease space in the new building from the tribes. The BIA is looking into the possibility but has not yet made a decision, Fuentes said.

She said the new building would bring the opportunity of a bank branch opening in Warm Springs.

"We want to bring banking services to the reservation," she said, "but I don't see that happening until a commercial code is adopted."

Even an ATM machine at the building would be helpful, allowing people to deposit and withdraw money, said Fuentes. Then at the right time, she said, "I know we could get a bank interested in opening a branch here, and we'll have space for them to move in to."

Code could help in lending and borrowing

By Brian Mortensen
Spilyay Tymoo

The key to economic development in Indian country, an official from the Federal Reserve Bank recently said at Kah-Nee-Ta, is leveling the commercial playing field both on and off the reservation.

Sue Woodrow, managing project director for the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, said the means to a level playing field is law applied to transactions involving personal property that are secured by collateral.

Such law would correspond to Article IX of the Uniform Commercial Code (UCC), the generally accepted code created to harmonize commercial law through each of the United States.

Woodrow said that above all, economic development is based on affordable credit extended to anyone at the same interest rates both on and off the reservation.

"It means that you can walk into your local bank, credit union or other lending institution and get the loan or extension of credit at the same interest rate or loan terms as any individual or business off the reservation," Woodrow said. "That is a very important principle."

Because of differences in tribal and state law, she said, loans to tribal members living on a reservation may be seen as a higher risk, and may bear higher interest rates. Banks are forced to impose higher interest rates because "banks are subject to examination by

their regulators by the regulators' standards," Woodrow said.

"Banks need to counter-balance higher risk with things such as higher interest rates," she said. "This is just a fact of life. Banks are not non-profit organizations; they are for-profit. They are highly regulated, and so these are things they have to do."

The banking practices apply not only to tribal members and enterprises, but also to privately owned businesses under tribal jurisdictions, she said.

Standardized financial law creates less risk for creditors. "That is what secured transaction law is," Woodrow said. "It is a set of rules that govern lender-borrower relationships."

Secured lending is making a purchase with collateral attached to the

purchase, which is different, for example, from buying with a credit card.

To create law compatible with Revised Article IX of the UCC in Indian Country, several tribes have approached the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws (NCCUSL), which developed the UCC along with the American Law Institute (ALI). The tribes and asked the NCCUSL to consider drafting a model tribal secured transaction code.

Woodrow was in charge of the committee that developed the model law, called the Tribal Secured Transaction Code. The process that took four years and was complete in June.

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Tribes hire new police chief

Enes Smith is returning as chief of the Warm Springs Police Department. Smith served as chief of Warm Springs Police in the mid-1990s.

Jim Soles, who has served as Warm Springs police chief for the past 14 months, is retiring this Friday, Sept. 30.

Smith is a former chief of the Madras Police Department. He is a teacher of criminology and sociology at Central Oregon Community College.

Training will be a main focus at the police department, Smith said. "I'm a teacher and I like to train people. We're going to work at identifying and training tribal members."

At Madras he was asked by the city council to train an officer of the department to become chief, and he accomplished that goal. Training a tribal member to become chief, he said, will be a primary goal during his tenure here.

Smith said he feels good about returning to Warm Springs. "I like the people and I like the job. I look forward to working with everyone here."

Smith worked for the Eugene and Springfield police departments for 16 years, and then for the Prineville Police Department as a lieutenant and captain.

Jim Soles plans to return to law-enforcement consulting. He had been retired briefly from police work before coming to Warm Springs 14 months ago.

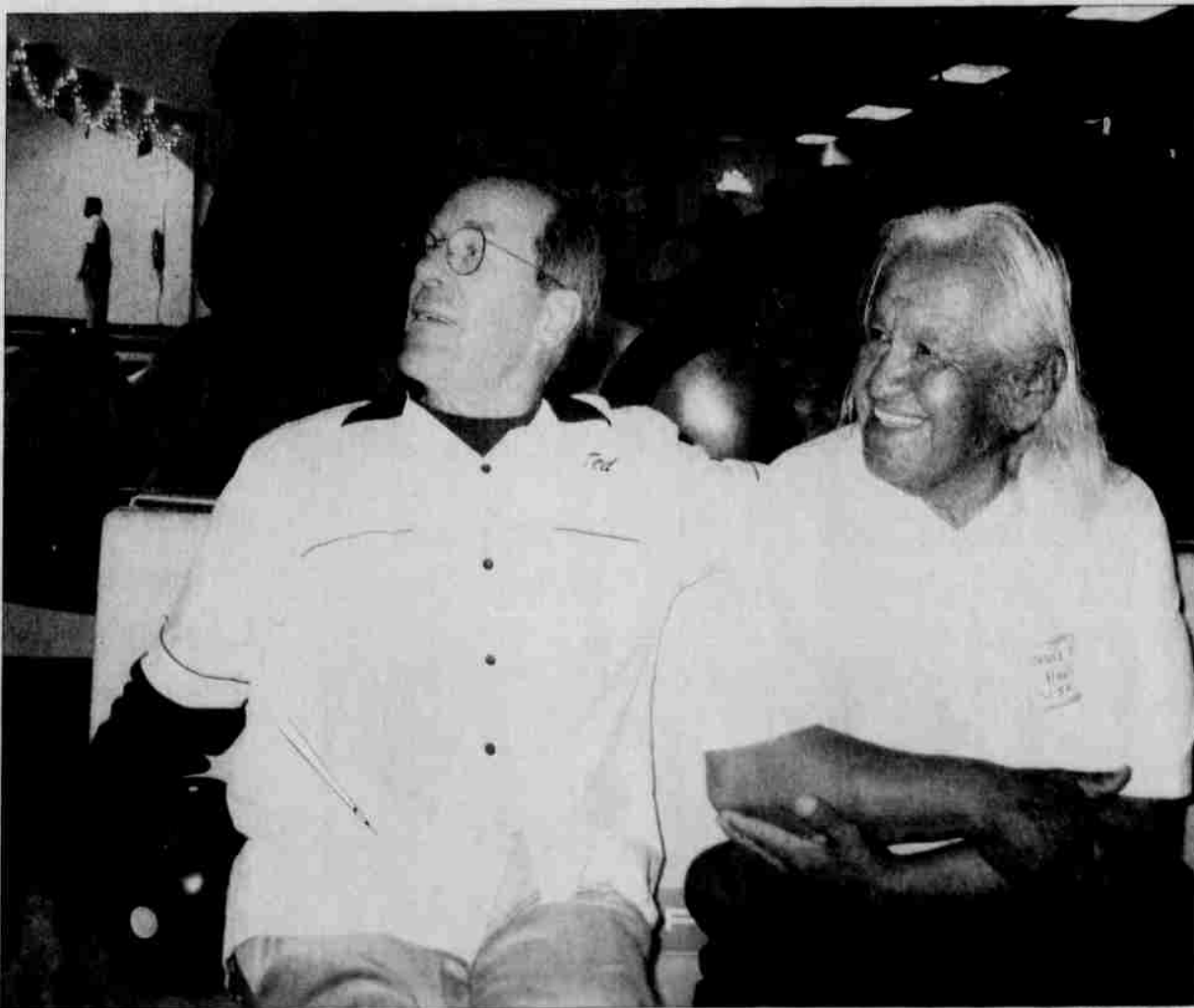
Gov. Ted Kulongoski and Warm Springs Chief Delvis Heath visit during a break from the bowling action last Wednesday, Sept. 21, at Tigard Bowl.

The gathering was a political fundraiser, and the tribes were invited to participate. Kulongoski and other state officials were on hand.

These kinds of events are helpful for the tribes, said Louie Pitt, director of tribal government affairs.

"It's very helpful because the state executives, such as the governor, and the people who make the laws, the representatives and senators, need to know who we are," said Pitt.

"These kinds of events give us a chance to get to know one another outside of a formal setting, then we can work better on issues of substance."



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