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Chairman's Report: Tribe acquires Strawberry Patch land

By Mark Mercier



On January 31, the Tribal Council, by resolution, elected to purchase 12 acres of land, adjacent to the Spirit Mountain Casino. For those of you who are not familiar with this property, a small stand known as the Strawberry Patch sold produce and other goods for many years prior to the Tribe acquiring the parcel.

Rumors in the local area are that the Tribe paid a price of one million dollars for this parcel. The actual final negotiated price was far below this amount. However, the Tribal Council felt this was indeed a crucial purchase, and I will explain the reasons for the Tribal Council acquiring this property.

For the last eight months, Tribal representatives and the former owner began negotiating a purchase. Negotiations broke down, resulting in litigation between the two parties, with lawsuits and Counter

lawsuits against each other. If the Tribe continued to carry this matter in a court of law, the amount of money spent would have been very substantial. Since the Casino has opened, land values have skyrocketed.

Scores of speculators are targeting lands for development. This parcel is prime commercial land off of highway 18, and other developers have voiced considerable interest in it. The Tribal Council's concern was if anyone else were to purchase it, there would be no control over what could be built there. Also, if an outside developer were to purchase this property, it would be extremely difficult to control what type of business were to be there. For instance, few within the Tribe or community would want to see a pawn shop or an X-rated video store here. Some people may feel that these con-

cerns are exaggerated. However, there already is a pawn shop in the Community. Unless the Tribe purchases land in the local community, there is no guarantee that such development can be prevented.

Currently, there are three recreational vehicle parks proposed within this community. The Tribe wishes to build a RV park adjacent to the Casino. Also, there are developers constructing another RV park adjacent to tribally owned property on Highway 18. Furthermore, there is another developer wishing to construct an RV park adjacent to tribally owned land on the intersection of Grand Ronde Road, and Highway 22.

It is anticipated that there will be more proposed developments in this area. Tribal Council should be on guard to prevent these types of businesses from infiltrating the area.

