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The Not Here Please News

The Newsletter of Citizens Against Reservation Shopping
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Greetings from the CARS crew! *The debate over the proposed Cowlitz casino is heating up. Here's the latest ...*

DOI reps to hold local meetings

As you have likely heard, representatives from the Department of Interior (DOI) will be in Vancouver for two public meetings to address concerns regarding the Cowlitz Tribe's applications and efforts to establish a Las Vegas-style casino-resort at the Interstate 5-La Center interchange. The meetings come in response to a request made by Rep. Brian Baird.

It is **extremely important** that we greet these DOI officials with a full house of casino opponents, so they can see and hear our local concerns.

The meetings will be:

7 p.m., Wednesday, Feb. 15 at the Prairie High School Auditorium, 11500 N.E. 117th Ave.;
and

7 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 16 at the Fort Vancouver High School Auditorium, 5700 E. 18th St.

This is an unusual opportunity, because the DOI does not usually hold meetings to respond to citizen concerns. We have gotten their attention—now we need to keep it and make sure they understand why a Las Vegas-style casino is a bad bet for Southwest Washington.

George Skibine, director of the DOI's Office of Indian Gaming Management, has been assigned to our case, and he invites your comments and questions. (We recommend you also send courtesy copies of written correspondence to James Cason, Associate Deputy Secretary, DOI and Rep. Baird.) Skibine and Cason will be at the February meetings along with other representatives of DOI, the regional Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC).

We have included addresses and telephone numbers, and a set of talking points at the end of this newsletter to help you get started. For more background information on this issue, check out our Web site—NotHerePlease.org.

Local groups reject NIGC opinion

Earlier this month, CARS and two other Clark County anti-casino groups—Stand Up For Clark County Citizens and American Land Rights Association—asked Interior Secretary Gale Norton to reject the National Indian Gaming Commission's (NIGC) restored lands opinion that says the Cowlitz Tribe has historical ties to land at the Interstate 5–La Center interchange.

The restored lands opinion could enable the Cowlitz casino developers to sidestep the requirement that their proposal pass the no-detriment test. Gaming is prohibited on newly acquired land unless developers can convince local governments, the Secretary and state governor that a casino would cause no detriment to surrounding communities. If the Secretary concurs with the NIGC's restored lands opinion, area communities will lose their voice and the casino developers will not need to prove that the project will cause no detrimental effects.

"From the outset, this tribe has worked to bar local governments from bringing into the process concerns about detrimental impacts a casino might impose on their communities," said CARS chairman Ed Lynch.

The Cowlitz restored lands opinion breaks from precedent by not requiring the tribe to have a strong relationship to the land. It actually expands the definition of restored lands to include areas where tribes have had a minimal connection.

Read our [news release](#) and [letter](#) at NotHerePlease.org, or check out the news stories in the Jan. 14 issue of the *Columbian* and the *Oregonian*.

Casino developers follow pattern

The Cowlitz casino developers are using strategies that attorney Guy Martin says he has seen used by tribes trying to establish casinos in other parts of the country.

He said the tribe "tries to create an atmosphere of inevitability." Its representatives say, "It's a done deal," and, "You might as well work with us."

If this whole process were a baseball game, Martin said, we are in the third or fourth inning—not the bottom of the ninth and on our last batter, as the casino developers would have us believe.

Based in Washington, D.C., Martin has represented communities, citizen groups and tribes around the country. The La Center cardrooms are among his current clients.

Congress takes on tribal gaming

Congress has responded to concerns regarding the nationwide proliferation of tribal casinos by introducing several bills in 2005 and scheduling hearings for early 2006.

Ridgefield resident Al Alexanderson will serve as a witness at the Feb. 1 Oversight Hearing on "Off-Reservation Gaming: The Process for Considering Gaming Applications" before the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. He is a former Oregon assistant attorney general. Tune in at 6:30 a.m. Pacific time via Internet to <http://indian.senate.gov/> for a live broadcast.

Bills introduced in 2005 include:

- S. 1260/H.R. 2353—*Common Sense Indian Gambling Reform Act of 2005*—Sen. Voinovich (R-Ohio), and Rep. Rogers (R-Mich.).

- S. 1295—*National Indian Gaming Commission Accountability Act of 2005*—Sen. McCain (R-Ariz.).
- S. 1518—*To amend the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act to modify a provision relating to the locations in which class III gaming is lawful*—Sen. Voinovich (R-Ohio).
- H.R. 3431—*To amend the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act to limit casino expansion*—Rep. Dent (R-Penn.).

Points to make—

1. Thank you for arranging the public meetings. With so little information available over the past few years, we are grateful that at last people are coming to answer our questions.
2. Many of our neighbors have tried to get information on the process and proposed project from the local BIA, but in nearly every case they have been ignored.
3. While portraying itself as a good neighbor, the Cowlitz Tribe has spent the past couple of years not only blocking local government and citizen involvement but also keeping us from understanding our rights and responsibilities in this process.
4. For seven months, we had no idea that the Cowlitz Tribe had applied to have the land at the La Center interchange “restored” to it. Doesn’t the government or tribe have a responsibility to inform stakeholders when such an application is made?
5. According to the BIA’s findings when it acknowledged the Cowlitz Tribe, its homeland was primarily along the Cowlitz River. Associated reports put its main settlements more than 40 miles north of the La Center interchange. The Indian Claims Commission put the southernmost point of its aboriginal homeland about 15 miles north of the interchange. The area near La Center was historically Chinookan territory, not Cowlitz. How can the NIGC “restore” this land to the Cowlitz Tribe, when its members did not use it to a great extent?
6. Before issuing the Cowlitz restored lands opinion, the NIGC had adhered to a fairly consistent standard. Why did it break so completely with past precedents this time?
7. The restored lands application process was impossible to understand, and the regional BIA and NIGC did not respond helpfully to requests for information. We would like the opinion set aside while a transparent, predictable and equitable process is developed and put in place.
8. When Rep. Baird requested these meetings in October, he asked that they be used to clear up confusion and take place before any more decisions were made regarding the Cowlitz Tribe’s applications. Why did it take so long to set up these meetings, and why did they not occur before the NIGC issued its restored lands opinion?

Direct your concerns and questions to:

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CARS is a local citizens organization that is concerned about the practice of reservation shopping and is dedicated to keeping large-scale casino gambling out of southwestern Washington.

If you have not yet joined CARS as a member, we invite you to add your name to our membership list. We will then be able to alert you when action is needed, so you can make your voice heard.

If you would like to support our work financially, we welcome your assistance. We are a nonprofit organization—501(c)(4)—but contributions are not tax deductible.

Please forward this message to others you think would be interested.

If you would prefer not to receive our e-mails in the future, please let us know by sending an e-mail to Info@NotHerePlease.org.

Watch for updates on our Web site,

NotHerePlease.org.

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