

North County Community Alliance *Newsletter*

January, 2007

Northwood Crossing Casino...

Why community should be concerned



by Tom Williams

On Wednesday Jan. 3, *The Lynden Tribune* stated that the May, 2006, announcement of Northwood Crossing Casino construc-

tion project was the biggest story of 2006. What have we learned over the past year about the Northwood Crossing Casino and casinos in general?

First, they operate under the radar in planning and constructing the casinos. This casino project was announced only at the last minute. Why? It follows the template used by hundreds of casino projects across the nation designed to catch communities off guard and eliminate opportunities to get organized and learn the facts. The casino builders hope communities will give up with a “done-deal” “nothing we can do” attitude. But in Lynden, the casino builders did not receive that expected response.

Second, they do not want any casino competition by off-reservation casinos. The 2004 Washington State Initiative 892 (which proposed to allow off-reservation gambling expansion equivalent to on reservation) was opposed by a massive five million+ dollar campaign funded by **tribal casino interests.** **What did the campaign say about gambling? They said, “Expanding gambling will result in increased family financial problems that lead to domestic violence, theft, alcohol and drug abuse and unemployment” “It’s bad for our families, bad for local governments, bad for taxpayers and bad for our economy”.** We could not agree more.

These statements are true, but were made for the sole purpose of maintaining their monopoly on gambling profits. Initiative 892 lost by a substantial margin as have three other similar Washington gambling initiatives. Voters overwhelmingly oppose gambling. It is innate to know that gambling is throwing money away.

Third, they negatively impact the local economy. If unchecked, the progression following a casino grand opening will start with massive profits. Even with the profits the tribal casino will be eligible for hefty federal subsidies from your tax dollars, unfair tax exemptions and special unfair preferences. Surrounding land values will drop dramatically and surrounding businesses will falter and close. Depreciated properties surrounding the casino will be acquired. County tax revenue will be lost and remaining non-tribal land taxes will increase.

Finally, non-taxable casino profits hardly help the local tribe. Prof. Kindt likened the casino to “Economic Cannibalism” of the existing economy. The casino will create “Economic Devastation”. *Time Magazine* reported that Indian casinos are not what the proponents promise. While they make billions, the profits do not go to the tribes or to the poor. Big business gambling investors and companies (always based out of your community and sometimes even out of the United States) rake in most profits—tax-free. The casino is here for your cash now. Your cash and the casino will be gone tomorrow. You and your family live here and the community is here to stay.

The proposed Northwood casino must be opposed. Legislation must be passed

Mark your calendar!

Elaine Willman
noted author, national
speaker, activist to speak
about tribal casino issues at
Lynden Senior Center on
Thursday, Feb. 8 at 7 PM



Elaine is author of the recently published book, *Going to Pieces, the Dismantling of the United States of America.*

Also, at the meeting get an update of the proposed Northwood Crossing Casino.

Donations will be accepted.

to restrict this gambling expansion plague on our state. If hundreds of people get involved and take action by writing and raising funds to oppose the casino, it’s probable the casino will never open. If you want to join this critical effort, please call NCCA at 255-3885 or 354-5656.

Current issues re: Northwood Crossing Casino

by Craig Mayberry Environmental Update

The environmental concerns over the Northwood Crossings Casino have centered on the storm water runoff and treatment of waste generated by the casino development. The EPA is requiring the Nooksack Tribe to follow the normal permitting process for waste treatment. Part of the EPA process calls for a public comment period after the EPA has received the waste treatment plans and prior to the EPA issuing a permit. There is not a similar process in the EPA to deal with storm water runoff and it appears no one has jurisdiction over making sure surrounding properties are protected. This will likely fall into the federal lawsuit against the National Indian Gaming Commission who is required by law to protect the environment.

Legal Update

The federal lawsuit against the National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC) was put on hold until we had more

information from the EPA. Now that we have a clearer understanding of the environmental issues we will again proceed with the lawsuit. The other portion of the lawsuit centered on the status of the trust land and whether it is eligible for a casino. The NIGC has argued that they do not make that determination until the casino is operational, however, a recent lawsuit in the State of New York is requiring the NIGC to do that during the signing of the state gaming compact. This ruling bolsters the opportunity of getting a favorable ruling in federal court. Given this new information, expect to hear more on the federal lawsuit in the near future.

Liquor License

We would like to thank the many citizens who wrote letters to the Washington State Liquor Control Board over the last few months. The Board has received more letters over this license than any previous liquor license. At this point we do not know when the



Craig Mayberry

Liquor Board will rule, but it seems certain that this issue will be tied up for a lengthy appeals process. It is our understanding that the State Attorney General's office is reviewing the information and providing a recommendation to the Liquor Control Board as the Nooksack Tribe has threatened to appeal if turned down. We would also like to thank Sheriff Bill Elfo who has been very vocal in his opinions that the proposed casino is a public safety issue. Despite a fair amount of pressure from the Nooksack Tribe to change his mind, he has stuck to the facts and has not backed down.

Next NCCA Forum

On Feb. 8 at 7 PM at the Lynden Senior Center we are privileged to have Elaine Willman return. Elaine is the chairman of the Citizen's Equal Rights Alliance (CERA) and has been active on tribal casino issues for many years. She will be able to provide our community insights into national discussions taking place in those meetings. If you missed the opportunity to hear MS Willman previously, take the time to join us on Feb. 8 as she will share additional information she has gleaned in her study of this issue.

Ways to get involved...

- Write letters to legislators. Voice your opposition. Contact NCCA at 255-3885 or 354-5656 for assistance
- Write to the liquor control board
- Put up a "No Casino" sign--if you need help, Ivan and Kay Likkel will put one up for you or replace your old one. 354-2208
- Sign the enclosed petition and get others to sign also
- Be informed--lots of info and books at Jon's Truck Repair--then pass them on
- Contribute to the cause

Available resources...

- Elaine Willman and the Citizen's Equal Rights Alliance www.citizensalliance.org
- Rev. Tom Grey and the National Coalition Against Legalized Gambling www.ncalg.org
- Prof. John W. Kindt's gambling research www.citizenling.org/fosi/gambling/cog/A000001154.cfm
- Focus on the Family www.citizenling.org and www.citizenling.org/fosi/gambling
- News and resources posted at www.ages.org

Reflections from board member, Bernie Mulder

Many in this community have been on a rollercoaster of events, announcements and emotions for the last six months. I want to take this opportunity to reflect on what has happened and recap some things that we have experienced and learned together as a community

After months of rumors and continued denials by the Nooksack Tribe that a casino was going to be built north of Lynden, the announcement finally came last May.

Many were outraged that there was no public comment and we were all told this was the sovereign right of the local Native American tribe while we were to sit and watch because it was a **“done deal.”** I, like many others at that time, thought there was nothing we could do as community members to change this outcome.

Many still believe there is nothing we can do. To those who believe

nothing can be done, I and other members of North County Community Alliance (NCCA) have worked hard for the last six months to prove that something can be done.

“Silence is consent” became our battle cry. For us to do nothing was to say, “It’s okay for you to come into our community uninvited and disrupt our way of life.” Then we learned that **we were not alone.** This is happening all over our country and others are fighting back as well.

Those that viewed our opposition to the casino as racism were spurred on by the uninformed media as well as by others who did not know the facts and therefore labeled us wrongly. Let us be very clear on this issue: **It is not the messengers we oppose, it is the product they deliver.** We as a community harbor no ill will towards native Americans, but we cannot and will not condone something that will forever

change our community, families, and neighborhoods for the worst.

Is there hope? Yes there is and we can win because **the truth is on our side.** It will take much effort by a united community and **we must never give up, never give up, never give up!**

For those of you who have begun to help us in this crucial campaign, thank you! Thank you for the letters you sent to the State Liquor Board, the Attorney General’s office, and the Governor. Also, thank you for the contributions you have sent us to sustain our opposition. This is a costly conflict, lawyers are expensive, and we need all the money you are willing to contribute to this just cause.



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