

Romulus casinos are still a possibility

By Molly Tippen
Journal Newspaper

ROMULUS, Mich. — Casinos in Romulus will move back to the front burner, and what's happening in the auto industry and in the state economy means that it's not a moment too soon, city officials said Tuesday.

Mayor Alan Lambert and other key city employees will meet with the members of the Sioux Indians, who hoped to build a casino in the city until Congress nixed the plan. Also, a partner with the Hannahville Tribe has contacted the city to possibly move forward on a deal that would not require congressional approval.

The big question for the tribes — and the city — is "How do we proceed?"

"We're meeting next week with the Sioux Tribe, and I received a call from a partner in the Hannahville Tribe, and we're excited about these meetings," Lambert said. "With everything that's going on right now, we're not just going to give up."

Gaming halls were part of a plan to revitalize the city employment picture, and make Romulus an entertainment destination for western Wayne County.

However, a House bill that would have allowed the Sioux to open a casino on non-reservation land failed in Congress, mostly because of opposition from the City of Detroit and concerns about the unchecked expansion of gaming.

Detroit has three casinos within its borders, and already faces stiff competition from Casino Windsor, which is located across the Ambassador Bridge.

Losses in the manufacturing sector — on which Romulus is dependent — have taken a toll on the city. Aid to the embattled automobile industry appeared unlikely on Tuesday, which makes city officials more resolute in terms of introducing gaming, Lambert said.

"If (the automobile industry) doesn't get the help it needs, it could be catastrophic for the region and the state," Lambert said.

"We already have hundreds of thousands of people out of work here in Michigan — we're already hurting," he added.

The losses mean a variety of problems for residents and the city—including more foreclosed homes, more requests for public assistance, and the potential of reduced property tax revenues.

Those revenues pay for services like police and fire, and so far, the city has been able to hold the line on laying off personnel, Lambert said.

Councilman William Wadsworth said he believes the area would be helped immensely by a casino, whether the automobile industry is bailed out or not.

"I'm behind it 100 percent, but will it happen? Only the future will tell," he said.

"What I can say is that it should be allowed to happen no matter what the economics are," Wadsworth added. "It would put 3,300 people back to work — and they would have insurance, and they'd be able to spend money. What we need here is jobs, jobs, jobs."

Casinos could be one panacea for those issues, city officials said. A combined development could generate 3,000 jobs for area residents, and could spur offshoot development that would improve the city tax base and bring additional jobs.

There is the prospect that the re-introduction of a bill that would again allow for the development of a casino on non-reservation could take place once President-elect Barack Obama's administration, and a slew of new legislators—take control in Washington.

In Detroit, there is speculation that Greektown Casinos—which is currently in Chapter 11 bankruptcy reorganization—could run out of money to operate, or complete several construction projects.

Lambert doesn't think adding a casino in Romulus would dilute the moneymaking prospects for Romulus or Detroit.

"There are three casinos downtown," he said. "We are in a different area, and a casino here would draw different people."

Tribal leaders accused of smoke-shop tax scam

By Krista J. Kapralos
Everett Herald

EVERETT, Wash. — Leaders of the Stillaguamish Indian Tribe lived in luxury for four years while Washington residents were cheated out of more than \$25 million that should have been collected as state tax on cigarettes, according to a federal court indictment.

Edward Goodridge Sr., his wife, Linda, and their son, Eddie Goodridge Jr., are accused of making at least \$55 million between March of 2003 and May of 2007 by selling tax-free cigarettes at their Blue Stilly Smoke Shop. The elder Goodridge is former chairman of the Stillaguamish Indian Tribe. Eddie Goodridge is the tribe's executive director.

Sara Milliron Schroedl, a relative of the Goodridge family and one-time tribal councilwoman, also is accused of sharing in the wealth.

The tribal leaders made so much money that Eddie Goodridge spent more than \$20,000 in cash one day in early 2006 at a motorcycle dealership, according to the indictment. Linda Goodridge on a day in June 2006 withdrew more than \$27,000 in cash from her bank account, according to court documents.

All four are expected to face U.S. District Court Judge James Robart in Seattle today to answer for trafficking untaxed tobacco. They were each indicted Nov. 5 on five counts of con-

spiracy to traffic cigarettes and engaging in monetary transactions involving property derived from unlawful activity, all federal felonies.

Edward Goodridge and his son plan to sign plea agreements that will require them to pay back some of the money that should have gone toward anti-smoking campaigns, programs to end youth violence and public schools, lawyers for both men said Wednesday.

Zenon Olbertz, a Seattle attorney who represents Edward Goodridge Sr., said the plea deal has been in the works for months. He could not confirm exactly how much his client will be asked to pay back, but said it's a "significant amount of money."

"There's also the potential of jail time," Olbertz said. "Obviously it's up to the judge."

Eddie Goodridge's attorney, Wayne Clark Fricke of Tacoma, said his client plans to be in court today to sign a plea agreement. He declined additional comment.

It's not clear whether similar negotiations are under way involving Linda Goodridge or Schroedl. Calls to Schroedl's attorneys were not returned, and it's not immediately clear who is representing Linda Goodridge.

Trouble began for the Goodridge family in May 2007, when armed federal agents raided the Blue Stilly and the homes of Edward and Linda Goodridge and Eddie Goodridge. The couple's younger son, Dean

Goodridge, who was then manager of the Blue Stilly, complained the agents trashed the house and scratched vintage cars and sports cars that are part of the family's vehicle collection.

Federal agents seized 3.5 million cigarettes from the Blue Stilly and 1.8 million cigarettes from an address in Clackamas, Ore., a suburb of Portland. Agents searched seven locations that day in Washington and Oregon as part of Operation Chainsmoker.

None of the cigarettes seized by the agents bore tax stamps required under state law. The Stillaguamish tribe didn't sign a compact with the state governing cigarette sales until early this year.

The Blue Stilly has been raided before.

In 2001, state investigators seized evidence there as part of a probe into untaxed cigarette sales. At the time, the shop was operated by Stormmy V. Paul. A Tulalip tribal member, Paul ran the smoke shop as a private business and paid taxes to the Stillaguamish Tribe until 2003, when the Goodridge family told him to leave.

Eddie Goodridge later said his family disagreed with the way Paul did business.

Paul pleaded guilty early this year to running a cigarette smuggling ring that spanned the globe, with pieces of the network in China, Russia, Brazil, Paraguay, Baltimore and the Tulalip Indian Reservation.

Paul argued that he has the right as an American Indian to do business without government supervision, but that argument failed. He is now halfway through a year-long sentence of home detention.

The Goodridge family has always controlled the Blue Stilly Smoke Shop, which is located on a small slip of tribal land just off I-5 near Arlington. Between March 2003 and May 2007, according to court papers, the tribe leased the land to Native American Ventures, a company owned by the Goodridge family and Schroedl.

The four tribal leaders bought cigarettes from a wholesaler, then sold them at the smoke shop. Profits were funneled through Native American Ventures to Automotive Management Inc., owned by Edward Goodridge Sr. and Linda Goodridge; Fatham Investments Inc., owned by Eddie Goodridge; and SLM Investments Inc., owned by Schroedl.

Payments totaling about \$5 million were made to each of the three companies during the four-year period, according to court papers. In total, the four tribal leaders raked in more than \$15 million in cash.

Federal prosecutors have cracked down in recent years on cigarette smuggling schemes on American Indian reservations. Tribal members around the region have faced criminal charges in federal court related to the sale of untaxed cigarettes.

Adobe everywhere



Monica Almeida/The New York Times

Adobe buildings, in Acoma Pueblo., which sits atop a 357-foot sandstone mesa in January 2008. Even here, the Dallas Cowboys connect a community fighting to maintain ancient traditions while adapting to the modern world. Gilbert Concho, a 60-year-old master potter and spiritual elder of the Acoma tribe worries constantly. He frets about losing the next generation to drugs and alcohol and teenage pregnancy. He dwells on his declining health. And he wonders, like much of America, if the pop starlet Jessica Simpson is messing with the confidence of Cowboys quarterback Tony Romo.

Tribes committed to increase Native speakers

By Malavika Jagannathan
Green Bay Press-Gazette

GREEN BAY, Wis. — With many Native American languages classified as endangered — with few native speakers remaining — two area Wisconsin tribes are heavily involved in revitalizing them.

Both the Oneida and Menominee tribes have ongoing efforts such as language preservation and community classes to ensure the languages survive into the coming

decades.

The 2000 Census reported that about three-quarters of people who classified themselves as Native American spoke English as their first language. Only 10 percent said they spoke a language other than English at home and did not speak English very well.

On the Menominee Reservation, fewer than 20 fluent speakers exist. Most of them are older and the language could die with them, which is why the tribe is committed to

encouraging as many second-language learners as they can, said Karen Washinawatok, director of the Menominee language and culture commission.

"One of our latest initiatives is that we have language sessions for elders," Washinawatok said. "Most of them spoke the language, but they had no occasion to use it and now they're in the process of relearning." Between 11 and 16 people take advantage of these sessions.

The commission has worked

to support the local school district by conducting a pilot program to train five teachers and a pool of substitute teachers.

"The schools are doing all they can, but our community needs to reinforce it within the families so children don't see it as a language isolated in the classroom but a living community language," Washinawatok said.

Likewise, the Oneida tribe has a plan to get all members to become fluent speakers in seven generations, which

includes offering language programs to community members and focusing on the language in the tribal school.

Tribal officials signed a charter in 2004, making Oneida the official language of the tribe, and committed to creating a pool of fluent speakers and developing a teacher certification program.

The Oneida Revitalization program has been in effect since the mid 1990s, hoping to reverse the language's endangered status.

Three men charged with cheating new casino

By Levi Pulkkinen
Seattle Post-Intelligencer

SEATTLE — King County prosecutors have filed charges against three New York men accused of trying to fleece the newly opened Snoqualmie Casino.

Jorge A. Acosta, Jose Peralta-Yapor and Marcos Peynado were arrested at the North Bend casino Nov. 10, four days after the tribe-owned facility opened.

Prosecutors have since charged all three men with first-degree cheating, a felony that carries a maximum sentence of five years in prison.

According to court documents, casino security spotted a group of six men trying a well-known cheating scheme at one of the casino's roulette tables.

One member of the group bought roulette chips at \$1 each and then surreptitiously pocketed some chips from the

table while playing. He then left the table with dozens of chips hidden in his pocket. That player then met a second player elsewhere in the casino and handed off the chips. The second player returned to the table, bought chips of the same color at \$25 each, and later cashed out the stolen chips at the higher value after playing.

Unlike poker or blackjack chips, roulette chips have no set dollar value. Instead, a dealer sets the chip value when

a player joins the game.

Police estimate the group of men was able to steal about \$1,500 from the casino in less than an hour.

According to police, Acosta, Peralta-Yapor and Peynado were helping three other men in the scam. The other men are not named in charging documents.

Acosta, 30, and Peynado, 26, were released from jail after posting bond. Peralta-Yapor, 28, remains in custody.