

Opinion *The Enterprise*

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Guest Commentary

Casino would have impacts here

By **MAYOR BRIAN PRIGEL**

Note: The city of Bingen has sent the following letter to the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Portland regarding the proposed casino in Cascade Locks, Ore. The Bingen City Council approved the text of the letter with a 4-1 vote on Sept. 2.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment regarding the gaming establishment at Cascade Locks proposed by the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation. The City Council of the city of Bingen has discussed this issue and would like to respond.

The city feels that even though the proposed gaming establishment would be located in Cascade Locks, Ore., it would have direct and indirect impacts on communities in Washington and specifically the city of Bingen.

□**Precedent:** The proposed gaming establishment would be located on a 25-acre fee parcel. The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation (Tribe) proposes to acquire the subject property and convert it to trust land. This would remove the parcel from the jurisdiction and control of the state of Oregon, Hood River County, and the city of Cascade Locks. The city feels that this would set a precedent and may open up the area to similar proposals from other tribes.

□**Housing:** The Columbia Gorge area and municipalities — including Oregon and Washington — have a significant shortage of "work force" housing. This problem is well-documented in past and cur-

rent housing need studies. The city is concerned that the need to bring in additional workers for the gaming establishment will bring added pressure to an existing issue. The city feels that the need for work force housing, both in Washington and in Oregon, should be addressed by the Warm Springs Tribe.

□**Infrastructure:** Many municipalities in the Columbia Gorge area have significant infrastructure needs and are faced with making priority decisions in just being able to serve established development. The need for additional housing will again add pressure to an existing issue. In addition, many of the cities and state roads are not adequate to handle additional traffic without upgrades. The city feels that any needs for upgrades in infrastructure that can be correlated to the placement of a gaming establishment in Cascade Locks should be addressed by the Warm Springs Tribe.

□**Compulsive Gambling:** Compulsive gambling is a problem throughout the United States. The establishment of a gaming facility in Cascade Locks may cause an increase in compulsive gambling for the citizens of the Columbia Gorge area surrounding Cascade Locks. The city feels the Warm Springs Tribe should be responsible for helping pay for treatment programs for compulsive gambling.

□**Law Enforcement:** The establishment of a gaming facility in Cascade Locks will likely require an increase in law en-

forcement personnel. A large facility that serves alcohol and provides for gambling will draw in people from all around the area. These individuals will be traveling both in Oregon and Washington, and some will reside in our towns. Facilities that serve alcohol and provide gambling may result in the increase of a variety of crimes including domestic violence, traffic violations, and driving while under the influence. The city feels the Warm Springs Tribe should be responsible for helping pay increases in law enforcement personnel that can be attributed to the establishment of the gaming facility.

The city of Bingen is not in the position to be able to quantify or develop studies and information that would provide for specifics to answer the question of whether or not the facility will have a direct or indirect impact on the city. It is clear, however, that many of the municipalities in the Columbia Gorge face limited funds to address the problems that already exist in their communities. These communities will be hard-pressed to find funding to address additional problems that can be attributed to the gaming facility in Cascade Locks.

In addition, many people have chosen to move to the Columbia Gorge area for a particular quality of life. The establishment of a gaming facility in Cascade Locks should not be allowed to change that quality of life.

Brian Prigel is the mayor of the city of Bingen.