

# Hood River News

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## City letter cites clear

## detriment in casino

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News staff writer

The Hood River City Council believes that siting a tribal gambling casino in Cascade Locks could negatively affect the area's quality of life.

This week, the elected body will mail a letter outlining these concerns to the Northwest Regional Office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Officials were asked by the agency to weigh in on six issues related to a Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs' proposal. Under federal review is the tribe's plan to construct a casino/resort on 25 acres in Cascade Locks' industrial park. Another 35 acres would be leased for parking and other uses.

The city crafted its document for BIA after taking public testimony in late September that largely opposed the casino. Staffers were also asked to provide input about the potential effect on resources.

"I don't think that we can state anything with certainty. We can only say we heard these assertions and they lead us to believe there will be detrimental effects," said Councilor Ann Frodel at Monday's meeting to approve the final draft of the letter.

Councilor Paul Cummings agreed to support the document but wanted the record to show that he was against it "in principle." Mayor Linda Streich advocated for the strong language in the correspondence, as did Councilors Frodel, Paul Blackburn, Laurent Picard and Arthur Babitz. Councilor Carrie Nelson was not present.

Under a new federal rule, communities within 25 miles of a proposed casino are asked to address any social and/or economic consequences that it could bring.

The summary of Hood River's letter states: "We have received a great deal of written and oral testimony asserting potentially serious detrimental effects on our economy, public safety, housing, families and quality of life.

"We have also received rebuttal testimony asserting minimal or mitigated effects. It is impossible to predict with certainty what will happen in the City of Hood River should the casino be built in Cascade Locks. Therefore, it is impossible for us to assert that there will be no detrimental effect on Hood River.

"To the extent our quality of life is negatively impacted, there is no remedy or monetary compensation that will mitigate it."



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**ANN FRODEL**

*That conclusion was reached after an explanation was given on these six points:*

- The probability that increased traffic would degrade air quality and contribute to acid rain and global warming.
- A likely increase in accidents along Interstate 84 brought by more traffic. City emergency service workers, if not responding directly, would be tasked with covering emergency calls while law enforcement officers and medics from other agencies were at the scene. Any diversion of traffic caused by accidents could also create gridlock on the freeway and in Hood River.

## CASINO

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■ The casino could "starve" local businesses of employees by drawing them away from lower-paying service sector jobs. The facility could also discourage the growth of high-tech businesses in the region by lowering the quality of life. The city expects the loss of tourism dollars if visitors opt for a trip to the casino instead of traveling to Hood River.

■ City and county voters are paying for two school bond levies to ac-

commodate student growth. But there is no evidence to show that the tribe will contribute any funding for increased enrollment brought by the casino.

■ Hood River has been offered no mitigation costs to offset the increased demand on services. And no amount of money can make up for any adverse effects on the local quality of life.

■ It is likely that a casino will bring a measurable increase in gambling addiction to the city. If that occurs, there will be more demand for treatment and a greater volume of crime.