

# Gaming To Continue in Present Casino, as Tribe Plans Expansion

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The space originally planned for the gaming area will become a 30,000-square-foot entertainment center, with entertainers already being booked for this summer.

The new resort to open Thursday is 127,000 square feet and includes 81 hotel rooms on three floors, one side overlooking the water. A new Horseshoe Bay Restaurant will seat 225, the Campfire Deli seats 40, and the White Tail sports bar, with a winter sports theme, seats 80 people against an icicle mural and with a view of the water. The facility follows the tribe's casino development plan to create a Northern Exposure theme that features native culture, brick, rock, and wood.

With the addition of the new gaming area, the facility will reach 152,650 square feet.

By comparison, the current casino and 136-seat restaurant is 55,650 square feet.

The new casino complex on Mackinac Trail sits on a bluff overlooking Lake Huron and lies just north of the current casino, across a parking lot. Construction work and finishing crews continue are working at the site and heavy equipment trucks are moving dirt and preparing the parking lot. Cleaning crews are readying hotel rooms for guests, and a deck on the water side of the complex is being finished.

Cory Wilson, communications director for the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, said tribal leaders have not firmed up the completion date of the expansion project, though he said the official grand opening, which was scheduled for late August or early September, remains on schedule and will include the opening of the new casino gaming floor.

Work on the new expansion will begin immediately, said Mr. Wilson. The addition plans only would be canceled if the tribe receives immediate approval by the NIGC for gaming at its current location.

The casino land use for the new facility was denied because not all tribal land can be used for gaming. At question is a parcel of land obtained by the tribe in 2000 and the U.S. Department of the Interior says it does not meet the legal requirements for a gaming license.

The Indian Gaming Regulatory

## Art Grants Available

The deadline is July 1 to apply for grant funding through the Eastern Upper Peninsula Regional Planning and Development Commission for Chippewa, Luce, and Mackinac counties.

The funding is through the Michigan Council for the Arts and Cultural Affairs Minigrant program. Applications will be accepted for arts and cultural projects that will start between October 1, 2006, and September 30, 2007.

Grants up to \$4,000 are available during this round of funding. There are only two rounds of funding this year.

The next deadline will be February 1, 2007, for projects that take place between April 1, 2007, through September 30, 2007.

For more information, call Ellen Benoit at the EUP Regional Planning office at (906) 635-1581. Applications can be picked up at 524 Ashmun Street in Sault Ste. Marie, or they can be downloaded from the organization's Web site, eup-planning.org.

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# Postal Service Consolidation Puts Agency, Union Workers at Odds

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the Traverse City mail processing center is designed just to process, sort, and cancel mail. It handles 120,000 single-piece letters every night.

The final decision has not been made about re-routing this category of mail in northern Michigan, Mr. Mruk said, and will not be made until three things take place: the study must be completed, the idea must be approved by postal officials in Grand Rapids, Chicago, and the agency's national headquarters in Washington, D.C., and a public meeting must be held to give people a chance to voice their opinions. The public meeting would be planned in Gaylord, he said.

Mr. Mruk said there is "no definitive answer" about when the study will be concluded by postal officials, noting that, "It could be 30 days, 90 days, or even longer" for a decision to be reached.

"If the change would be made, part of the process would be a review every three months for the first year," Mr. Mruk said, "to ensure efficiency. There would be nothing to be gained from a business standpoint unless we can provide the level of service our customers expect."

Chris Levi, a mail clerk at the St. Ignace Post Office and local president of the union, disagrees. He doesn't believe that the small, single-piece, first class customer, who comprises a small part of the mail service's volume and income, is the Postal Service's top priority, and said that moving processing tasks further away from the local area can only slow service time.

"It's a matter of systematically taking the postal service and weeding out distribution sites," Mr. Levi told *The St. Ignace News*. "I'm hearing, through both union and management channels, that our mail processing for the 497 zip codes may eventually move even further south, to Grand Rapids or Lansing. Look at the logistics. You are taking mail from Gaylord, which is centrally located on a four-lane expressway, and moving it farther away from us to Traverse City, on two-lane roads. How can it not be slower service? I know that some of our mail, on three weekend days, is already going to Lansing by truck. That's a pretty new development. I, myself, have picked up Goetzville, Hessel, Drummond Island mail that used to go through the Sault, that now comes through us in St. Ignace to Lansing for processing on the weekends."

Mr. Levi said he believes moving weekend mail to Lansing for processing is an indication that

more northern Michigan mail will be processed in Lansing or Grand Rapids in the future, a move that he said will be bound to slow delivery. He said he is concerned, as a postal employee and as a postal customer.

"I am a customer, too," he said, "and I want the same kind of service here I could get if I lived downstate. The Postal Service is supposed to work for the people, not for themselves. I do not agree with Mr. Mruk. And managers at the post offices have been instructed not to talk about this."

In a Letter to the Editor in the June 8 issue of *The St. Ignace News*, Mr. Levi urged citizens to contact their state representatives urging their support of keeping the local mail in the Gaylord processing center.

The mail processing change is being considered, as are others in his district, Mr. Mruk said, because of changes in the way people are using the mail service. In recent years, the increase in the use of e-mail and online bill paying has hurt Postal Service revenue. Since 1998, the volume of this single-piece first class mail has shrunk by 11 billion pieces, or four percent, but it still requires the most handling of any mail category.

At the same time, Mr. Mruk pointed out, mail volume is swelling from large commercial mailers who pre-sort or barcode their mailings and drop them off directly at mail processing plants. All of this means it takes less manpower for the post office to handle that pre-sorted mail category, which now comprises 75 percent of all mail. Part of the cost savings to the agency, if the decision is made to re-route the 497 mail through Traverse City, will stem from consolidation of staff at the Gaylord mail center. No career, union employees will lose employment in the process, Mr. Mruk said, although they may be reassigned to other jobs. It may prove that temporary employees at the Gaylord office, hired every six months or so on a temporary basis to smooth out the seasonal peaks in demand, may no longer be needed there.

"These are people hired with the understanding that they are temporary," Mr. Mruk said.

Acknowledging that the possibility of such a change may not be popular with the postal workers

union, he said, "We do disagree with the unions that there would be a decrease in service."

Dan Windsor, postmaster at the Gaylord Post Office, and Chris Nathan, officer in charge at the St. Ignace Post Office, did not comment and referred inquiries to Mr.

Mruk. The Greater Michigan District of the U.S. Postal Service is also studying consolidation of operations in the Detroit metropolitan area, in Indiana, and in Illinois, in addition to the study at the Gaylord mail center.

# Mackinac Money To Serve as Tool for Merchants, Chamber

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more programs to promote the local business community.

"Essentially, it's a tool to create an advertising budget that the chamber is not getting from its membership fees," Mr. Brown said, noting that the project has cost only about \$600 to launch. He hopes to sell 10,000 Mackinac Money bags this year, generating income of \$100,000. Half of those funds would go back into the Mackinac Money program, which he hopes to grow to 40,000 bags in circulation in the next three years, and half of the funds would be a revenue source for the Chamber of Commerce to develop further plans.

"Hopefully, by next year at this time, Mackinac Money will be in place, and we can build on that with another new program to launch," Mrs. Peterson said. The

Chamber of Commerce board is working on plans to launch a "Shop St. Ignace" campaign geared to residents across the area, which will be released this fall.

In the meantime, Mr. Brown is planning to launch Mackinac Money by having a crew of young volunteers hand out free sample coins in St. Ignace and possibly Mackinaw City in the next couple of weeks.

"The idea will be tested as businesses see how the nickels work. When businesses join in, the more people work together, the greater the value of the bags, and the more will go into circulation," Mr. Brown said. "It will launch a collaborative feeling. The small businessmen know that, individually, everyone struggles, but this would begin to bring all of our efforts together."

# Church Youth To Host Doughnut Sale

The Senior High School Youth of Zion Lutheran Church will sell fresh Krispy Kreme doughnuts Friday, June 16, beginning at noon

at Glen's Market in St. Ignace. Anyone who wants to reserve a dozen doughnuts should call the church at 643-7870.

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