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no and an alternative

February 7, 2004

Several current and former city and state officials have sent The Capital Times opinion columns on the proposed DeJope casino, which will go before Dane County voters in a Feb. 17 referendum. Here are excerpts from those columns.

Casinos benefit tribes, citizens

By George Meyer

Because of my extensive responsibilities in working with Wisconsin's American Indian tribes during my many years working with the Department of Natural Resources, I personally witnessed the benefits of Indian gaming to the tribes and to state taxpayers.

After Wisconsin voters approved legalized gambling and gaming compacts were implemented, I saw the transformation of the poorest of the poor in Wisconsin into highly successful and productive governments and businesses and a positive economic force in Wisconsin.

On my regular visits to reservation lands, I saw new septic systems and wells replacing formerly unhealthy situations. I saw struggling families move from tar shacks into decent well-kept housing with indoor plumbing. I saw restored pride and self-esteem in the faces of newly employed tribal members who for far too long had subsisted on state and federal taxpayer-paid welfare. I saw children and elders receive good medical care. I saw new automobiles, trucks, appliances and other consumer goods bought in stores in neighboring communities.

The funding for this housing, employment, health care and consumer buying came from Indian gaming.

In counties where Indian casinos are leading employers, total employment grew an average of 2 percent faster than in other areas over the past decade - an incremental increase of nearly 22 percent faster than statewide employment growth.

Welfare in the 11 Wisconsin counties with Indian casinos dropped 79 percent over six years, saving taxpayers \$30 million a year. Indian gaming and related enterprises have already created 35,000 Wisconsin jobs, most of which are held by non-Indians.

Despite these impressive strides, there is more to do to improve the quality of life for all who live in this state.

There are 6,000 unemployed workers in Dane County. Our state and local governments continue to struggle with budget cuts in vital education, public safety, environmental and human services programs.

Allowing casino gaming at DeJope will continue the progress for Ho-Chunk tribal members and benefit the people of Dane County. *George Meyer is the former secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.*

No windfall from DeJope

By Fred Risser

Casino expansion supporters contend that Dane County will experience a windfall in tourist spending that will lead to more money for local businesses and more tax revenue for local governments. That sounds like a sure bet until you scratch just below the surface of those claims.

If the proposed DeJope casino were the first of its kind in the state, the proponents might have an argument. Even if it were the second, third or fourth of its kind, it could still carry some weight. What weight will that claim of an economic windfall carry when DeJope becomes the 17th Wisconsin casino?

The majority of the gamblers who will patronize a casino on the east side of Madison will not be from out of state, or even out of the county. They will be people who would have spent those discretionary dollars at other Dane County leisure venues and businesses already established in this community.

The same holds true for the employment shift that would occur. With our relatively low unemployment rate, the casino jobs will not take people off unemployment roles. They will pilfer them from other businesses that will already be grappling with the economic threat planned on the east side.

Fred Risser is a longtime Democratic *state senator representing Madison's 26th District.*

Casino hardly the only option

By Fred and Barbara Arnold

Advocates of casino gaming at DeJope appear fixed on the past, undeterred by inherent limitations in the pursuit of single-source revenue dependency. The county, the city, other public sector entities and private sector interests continue to ignore the "other" option. The other option is conceptual. If viewed as a land use question representing an array of opportunities, with the proposed casino one of them, the discussion broadens.

Why must the city and the county restrict consideration of possible tribal

enterprises solely to gaming and supporting services, e.g., lodging, entertainment, restaurants and limited retail establishments? Greater Dane County, seen as a regional economic unit, is noted for a skilled and diverse labor force, creative and entrepreneurial leaders representing both the private and public sectors, and extensive technical and biotechnical initiatives with potential for-profit application. We have a proven supporting network of institutions, most notably the University of Wisconsin and Madison Area Technical College.

The available and developable acres controlled by the Ho-Chunk Nation are located in the midst of a high employment mix of economic activity that continues to define Dane County. Why would decision-makers ignore the obvious investment opportunities inherent in this setting? Gaming requires little and contributes little to Dane County's sophisticated economic base. From the tribal trust lands a southern gateway to the city could arise - a technically oriented manufacturing and research center that uses the considerable economic resources unique to the region.

Frederick M. Arnold is a former Madison City Council president and former member of the Dane County Board. Barbara B. Arnold is a former president of the Madison School Board.

City, Ho-Chunk should partner

By Bert G. Zipperer

Since we have legally allowed Wisconsin to promote gambling (through the state lottery), we cannot deny it to our neighbors, the American Indian nations: It is their right, as members of a sovereign nation, to determine whether or not to pursue a casino.

Putting a casino at DeJope will not promote urban sprawl. The Ho-Chunk own about 45 acres that are "landlocked" by major highways on two sides and city land on the other two sides. This is one of the most limited developments on the edge of Madison, in terms of the land available to the Ho-Chunk.

Our city government and local businesses could partner with the Ho-Chunk in ways that would benefit everyone. Transportation links and joint business promotion should be on the public agenda, rather than the fear campaign about "social costs."

I do not believe the Ho-Chunk casino should be debated on how much financial gain is in it for the city or the county. Let's not assume a casino is an alternative for fair taxation at the local and state levels. We in Wisconsin need to institute fair, progressively based taxation in order to ensure high-quality public services for all Wisconsin residents.

Meanwhile, the Ho-Chunk have the right to make a decision about how to use their sovereign lands.

All of us in Dane County live on former Ho-Chunk lands that were

involuntarily surrendered to the United States only 172 years ago - in 1832. Madison is on Ho-Chunk land. The Ho-Chunk are not encroaching on Madison lands.

I am disturbed that we fail to recognize our local Ho-Chunk heritage in Madison. After the casino is approved, perhaps we can learn to live as equals and as partners, benefiting from each other and learning to be good neighbors on this land - the original land of the Ho-Chunk Nation.

Bert Zipperer is a former Madison alderman and mayoral candidate.

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