

Tribe moves ahead with casino plans



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The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs are ready to move ahead on plans to build a gambling casino in Hood River County.

Tribal leaders have decided that the worsening economic plight on the reservation is forcing a decision. Currently, a decline in the natural resource industry has hiked the tribe's jobless rate to 60 percent during the winter months. The average per capita income now stands at \$8,583 compared with Hood River County's average of \$17,877.

On Monday, Hood River County Commissioner Carol York briefed the Cascade Locks City Council about the sense of tribal "urgency" to resolve the siting issue. She has been told that negotiations with Gov. Ted Kulongoski to build the facility in Cascade Locks have been going well.

However, Garland Brunoe, chair of the Warm Springs tribal council, is asking local government leaders to reiterate to Kulongoski their strong support for constructing the gaming center in the rural community instead of on 40 acres of trust land just east of Hood River.

"They want action and they are ready to move forward in Hood River County. Now we need to help the governor make a decision for the compromise location in Cascade Locks," said York.

She said the 120-acre industrial park within the urban center of Cascade Locks is a much better placement for the casino than the National Scenic Area property near Hood River. Although both city and county leaders are opposed to the Hood River location, she said the impoverished community of Cascade Locks will welcome the economic boost.

On Thursday, York plans to meet with Dennis Karnopp, tribal attorney, to get more information about the Warm Springs' direction. York will then request a personal meeting with the governor. She is aware that he has little interest in authorizing off-reservation casinos but, like many other leaders, believes that there is a compelling case to support the change in location.