

SANTA YNEZ VALLEY NEWS

March 2, 2006

By Richard Gomez

Vice Chairman, Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians

While there is always a certain amount of misinformation swirling around the community regarding issues concerning our tribe, perhaps the most troubling are the half-truths regarding tribal land development. Our development plan for our 6.9 acres across the street from our Resort is a perfect example of misinformation creating a skeptical feeding frenzy in the community.

In this column, I hope to set the record straight regarding our plans for the 6.9 acres and provide readers with information regarding the process of tribal land development.

Although we have stated it time and time again, it bears repeating: We plan to build a museum, retail facility and public park on our 6.9 acres. There are no plans for a casino.

For starters, let's look at this logically. We spent three years and more than \$150 million to build a 88,000-square-foot casino facility and an 80,000-square-foot luxury hotel. Our Business Committee met with the design/build team every week over the course of the project to discuss the progress and make multiple decisions pertaining to the project.

Our general manager of the casino has spent significant hours fine-tuning the operational aspect of the Chumash Casino Resort and, along with his team, has made it into the entertainment destination of choice in the county. Given all that, why would we build a casino across the street?

Secondly, our tribal/state compact agreement limits us to 2,000 slot machines. It wouldn't make economic sense for us to cannibalize our resort by building another one across the street. Take a smattering of logic, blend in basic economics and the answer is that our plans for our 6.9 acres do not include gaming-related buildings. Period.

Tribal opponents love to say that the tribe is "circumventing the law" when it comes to land development. Although that statement may make an excellent sound bite on the 6 o'clock news, it isn't true by any stretch of the imagination.

A review of the list of development issues that the tribe faces reveals that we do follow rules and regulations, just as developers do. The main difference is that tribes are required to adhere to federal regulations as opposed to local and state regulations. Same requirements, different governing bodies.

A comparison of a few land development issues demonstrates that not only does the tribe follow a standard set of rules and regulations, but in many cases, they are the same as those followed by developers of non-tribal land.

Under the topic of life safety, fire, mechanical and plumbing are all administered by the same governing bodies for both tribal and non-tribal land: Uniform Fire Code, Uniform Mechanical Code, Uniform Plumbing Code, respectively. The building codes are virtually the identical for tribal and non-tribal land development. The approval process for utilities is also identical regardless of tribal or non-tribal status.

The bottom line is that is simply preposterous to say that our tribe does not follow rules and regulations when it comes to land development. You can see for yourself by reviewing a land development comparison chart on our Website at www.santaynezchumash.org - click on the tribal government button.

We strongly believe that our proposed museum on our 6.9 acres will be a jewel in the community and our retail facility and public park will be a welcome addition to this wonderful Valley we call home.

Richard Gomez is the Vice Chairman of the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians. He lives in Santa Ynez.