

Business Review Western Michigan

April 5 – 11, 2007



"And from you, Mr. VanderKelfen, a little less thinking outside the box, if you please."

Editorial:

Let the chips fall

As best as we can tell, there are at least four ways to cut this: You're against all casinos. They are morally, socially or economically evil.

- You argue we have plenty of casinos right now, we need no more.
- You think a casino outside Wayland, which would be about 20 miles from downtown Grand Rapids and operated by the Gun Lake Band of Pottawatomi, would suck more commerce out of the central city, and that's not a good thing.
- You're not an advocate of native American entrepreneurship, to put it delicately.

Two factors have highlighted these divisions in anti-casino philosophy. One is the stay ordered by U.S. District Judge John Penn March 5 was for 30 days, so that's up now. His order was to allow **MichGo** and other anti-Gun Lake Tribe casino groups yet even more time to file an appeal.

The other incident involves Peter Secchia, **Universal Forest Products Inc.** chairman emeritus, who reportedly is looking into bringing a casino into downtown Grand Rapids. The gambling facility would not be owned by native Americans, but a public-private partnership.

Secchia, as member of **23 Is Enough**, publicly opposed the Gun Lake Tribe casino, just as he has publicly noted he's been branded by some as "racist" — his term — for his remarks. His position now is a downtown casino might keep more dollars there, rather than traveling south to Allegan County.

The Gun Lake Tribe reacted as strongly as you might expect.

"The tribe is calling on 23 Is Enough, MichGo and the **Grand Rapids (Area) Chamber of Commerce** to oppose the Secchia casino with the same ferocity as they've demonstrated against the Gun Lake Tribe," John Shagonaby, tribal vice chairman, contended in a e-mailed statement. "If they do not fight the Secchia casino, they should drop the lawsuit and opposition to the compact immediately.

"If they do not oppose this casino, all of them are nothing more than hypocrites."

Shagonaby sees the choices as "pro- or anti-casino," ... or maybe just pro- or anti-native American.

If a business leader wants to explore adding a casino downtown, we say let the market dictate what it wishes. And as for the whole Gun Lake Tribe casino issue, we say: Enough already. The state Legislature should OK the revenue-sharing compact and, again, let the market tell us what it wants.