

# Gun Lake Tribe, FOGLI, blast Secchia, opponents

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Peter Secchia is acting like "The Dictator of West Michigan," according to Friends of Gun Lake Indians (FOGLI).

The tribe and FOGLI claim Secchia has ulterior motives in his recent decision to sever ties with anti-casino political action group 23 is Enough.

23 is Enough and MichGO oppose all new casino operations in Michigan, but have recently focused their energies on preventing the Match-E-Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatomi, also known as the Gun Lake Tribe, from building a casino in Bradley.

*"Are they pro, or anti-casino? Are they only anti-Native American?"*

**John Shagonaby,  
Gun Lake Tribal Chairman**

Secchia, business magnate, and former U.S. Ambassador to Italy, has recently said that he would like to see a commercial casino in Grand Rapids, that was owned by the City, and citizens.

Foes of the Gun Lake Casino have a variety of reasons for opposing the

Please see FOGLI, page 2

## FOGLI

continued from page 1

project.

While some object to all gambling, on religious or moral grounds, some fear that casinos harm the community by causing an increase in gambling addiction, debt, suicide, and other social ills.

Others take a business-oriented stance, fear that a casino would unfairly compete with the attractions that Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo have to offer.

From the beginning, many prominent Grand Rapids business leaders, the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce, and Downtown Development Authority, have opposed the Gun Lake Casino.

According to the tribe and FOGLI, Secchia, 23 is Enough, and MichGO, have lost credibility and their motives for opposing the tribe are strictly financial. They also claim there may be an element of racism in their opposition.

"The tribe is calling on 23 is Enough, MichGO, and the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce to oppose the 'Secchia casino' with the same ferocity as they've demonstrated against the Gun Lake Tribe," said Gun Lake Tribal Chairman, John Shagonaby.

MichGO and the tribe said there might be a racist factor in the actions and attitudes of opponents.

"Six years ago, casino opponents publicly taunted the tribe with racial slurs and 'tomahawk chops,'" said Friends of the Gun Lake Indians (FOGLI) council member Marcia Halloran. "Afterwards, we started FOGLI for fair and equal treatment

of the tribe."

"Are they (opponents) pro- or anti-casino? Are they only anti-Native American?" Shagonaby asked.

In 2003, Rick Johnson, then Speaker of the Michigan House of Representatives, said Secchia opposed the Gun Lake Casino because he did not get a "piece of the action," Halloran said.

The anti-casino groups have aggressively attempted to prevent the tribe from offering Class III, Las Vegas-style gaming. Both groups have not changed their stance, despite the fact that Governor Jennifer Granholm recently signed a negotiated compact with the tribe.

Before the tribe can move forward with their plans, the land must be placed in trust by the federal government.

Due to legal maneuvers by MichGO, that action has been delayed. In May 2005, MichGO filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Department of the Interior's (DOI) decision to take the tribal land into trust. In February, U.S. District Court Judge John Garrett Penn ruled in favor of the tribe, and the DOI was prepared to take the land into trust as early as 5 p.m. on March 5. The same day, MichGO asked for, and was granted, the right to appeal Garrett's decision, and has since filed that appeal.

"FOGLI is urging all citizens to quit ignoring that Peter Secchia is acting like the 'Dictator of West Michigan,'" Halloran said. "Secchia's 23 is Enough is funding the lawsuit, delaying the Gun Lake Casino."

Meanwhile, the community could be reaping the benefits of thousands of jobs, millions of dollars worth of

local vendor contracts, and millions of dollars in local revenue sharing, she added.

"If they do not fight the Secchia casino, they should drop the lawsuit and opposition to the compact immediately," Shagonaby said. "If they do not oppose this casino, all of them are nothing more than hypocrites."

"Neither (anti-casino groups) have spoken out against gaming expansions, or proposed expansions from the horse racing industry, or the state lottery," said Tribal Spokesman, James Nye. "It is transparent that their true intent is to oppose the Gun Lake Casino, due to the perceived threat of competition."

Nye called 23 is Enough and MichGO "radicals" who have spent millions of dollars to delay economic progress for the tribe.

"It is time for the leaders of these

organizations to answer a simple series of yes or no questions to provide the true intent of their organizations," he said.

Nye, the tribe, and FOGLI want to know, "Why haven't you opposed expanded gaming in the State of Michigan?" Nye said.

"Would your organization ever support a casino in downtown Grand Rapids? Have you ever, or would you ever, accept financial, or in-kind contributions from gaming organizations to delay the opening of the Gun Lake Casino? Is it your true intent and focus to delay the Gun Lake Casino?"

Answers to these questions, compared to the actions, or inactions, of opponents, will "Continue to highlight the unending inconsistencies of these organizations as they continue their fruitless opposition of the Gun Lake Casino," Nye said.

## FOGLI promotes 'fairness'

The mission of Friends of the Gun Lake Indians (FOGLI) is to "Voice public support and promote the issue of fairness toward the Gun Lake Tribe."

FOGLI board members include Judy Bott, Kathy Bowerman, Elise DeYoung, Marcia Halloran, Jerry Luyk, Bob Wagner, and Terry Whitley.

The group formed in 2001, following an informational meeting held at Wayland Union Schools, about the tribe's proposed Gun Lake Casino, in Bradley.

At that meeting, casino supporters met with opposition to the casino, and some of the opponents became hostile and resorted to racial slurs and offensive hand gestures.

Since that time, the organization, and the ranks of casino, and tribal, supporters has grown.

At a meeting in April of 2001, 250 attendees expressed support for the tribe. Subsequent rallies drew crowds of 500 and 1,000.

Today, FOGLI has over 10,000 members who continue to support the tribe and its efforts to bring a casino to Wayland Township.

For more information on the tribe, and FOGLI, visit their Web sites or visit [www.fogli.org](http://www.fogli.org) or [www.mbpi.org](http://www.mbpi.org).

## KNITTING

continued from page 1

Rachael saved money in her account, and bought two grocery bags full of toys to donate to patients at DeVos Children's Hospital.

"She was beaming from ear to ear!" when she dropped the toys off, Michelle Bosse said.

The knitting project is a way for granddaughter and grandmother to spend quality time together, and for DeJong to teach Bosse about the volunteerism. Together they visit Newborns in Need and deliver the caps. There, the hats receive a tag that reads, "These were lovingly made by..." and Rachael adds her name to the tag.

DeJong also creates layettes and gowns for babies that have died. Rather than consider the items "bereavement gowns," the seamstress prefers to call them "Christening gowns."

DeJong has sewed gowns for all ages of babies.

"I've made them seven inches long," DeJong said.

The tiny gowns are given the same care that DeJong once put into her wedding gowns, and she often uses intricate wedding gown lace, left over from her business.

Bosse's family is proud of her and happy for her thoughtfulness and that she has decided to "follow in her grandmother's footsteps."

"This little girl has got a loving, giving heart," DeJong said.