

What's Happening with the Casino? – Update 11/14/2017

This question is on the minds of many, so we will try and provide an answer.

The short answer is that on opening deer hunting weekend there was an occupied deer stand on what is proposed to be the casino parking lot. Had the developer's original "fall of 2017" timetable come to pass, there would have been no hunting on that parcel of land!

The longer answer is Otter Tail County (OTC), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Minnesota DNR, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and a host of other agencies/stakeholders are playing a waiting game while the developers decide whether to go forward or not.

On August 22 one of the primary goals of the Star Lake Concerned Citizens Group (SLCCG) was achieved when the OTC Board of Commissioners unanimously passed a "positive declaration" and required a formal Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) be completed before any permits be issued. As a part of that action, the developers are now required to post \$30,000 in funds with OTC to cover the estimated costs of "a scoping decision", that is defining the breadth and depth of the EIS. The developers had 30 days from August 22 to challenge the County's EIS requirement in court. No challenge was made and the requirement for an EIS stands.

Should the developers decide to go forward, their next move would be a deposit of the above funds with OTC. Nothing will happen officially until those funds are paid. The SLCCG is prepared to work with OTC to help define the scope and requirements of the EIS. The SLCCG would once again call on our legal and environmental expertise as necessary to assist in that effort.

Once the "scoping decision" is completed, the developers would then also be responsible for up-front funding of the EIS process. The County would need to select an additional consulting firm to conduct the EIS process, including the estimated cost of such. ALL COSTS of the EIS study are required to be paid in advance by the developers. While those costs are not yet determined, it would not be surprising for the full EIS to cost many hundreds of thousands of dollars and take six months to a year or longer to complete.

We are also aware that there is increasing debate within the White Earth Band (WEB) community and the greater Minnesota Chippewa Tribe (MCT) regarding the proposed Star Lake Casino project. We understand there is discussion of a tribal referendum on the project, of a pending revision of the tribal Constitution, scheduled elections of Tribal leadership positions, and a scheduled censure-ship hearing concerning charges of malfeasance by a member of the WEN Tribal Council. The implications of these issues are unclear at this time, but certainly any or all of these could have significant impact on the future of the proposed Star Lake casino project.

Back to point of beginning ... We are in a waiting game, monitoring and maintaining regular contact with OTC and the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers.

Want to help? We are still raising funds for the next phase.

Sincerely,
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