

UAW asks Foxwoods to bargain

By Heather Allen
New London Day

The United Auto Workers union continued to beat its drum at Foxwoods Wednesday, demanding that management sit down and bargain collectively on behalf of nearly 3,000 dealers at the casino.

The union is collecting signatures - 1,500 so far - and plans to submit what they are calling a "solidarity statement" to management, according to a UAW-penned letter obtained by The Day.

While no one from the UAW would comment on the letter, which was sent to dealers who have not already offered to sign the solidarity statement, it states that the group, on behalf of poker and table-game dealers, will be "publicly releasing our Solidarity Statement and list of signers and presenting it to Foxwoods management."

The signature drive is another attempt by the UAW to show management it has the support of dealers and persuade the casino that a contract should be negotiated.

The letter is dated Aug. 13 and urges recipients to join the other 1,500 workers who offered their signatures. No specific date or target number of signatures is discussed in the letter.

On June 30, the National Labor Relations Board in Washington certified the union election held at Foxwoods last year in which a majority of dealers voted in favor of representation by the UAW.

Since then, the Mashantucket Pequot Tribe, which owns and operates the casino, has refused to bargain collectively with the union, suggesting that the UAW organize under tribal labor law, not federal law.

News of the signature drive and support of approximately half of the dealers at the casino did not cause the Mashantucket Pequot tribe to waver in its position.

"The tribe has been very clear that Foxwoods management will bargain with any union that is certified under tribal law," said Richard Hankins, an attorney representing the tribe. "It's perplexing that if the union really wants to have a contract, why doesn't it follow tribal procedures and instead continues to pursue protracted litigation?"

The UAW has filed an unfair labor practice claim against the tribe. The complaint was affirmed by the NLRB in Hartford and moved up the line to the NLRB in Washington, which has yet to rule on the complaint.

It is expected that the board will order casino management to bargain with the UAW. At that point in the process, the tribe can again refuse and ask for a review of the case in the U.S. Court of Appeals, which it has vowed to do.

The letter categorizes the tribe's refusal to bargain as a "direct violation of labor law."

"While we are not surprised, we are angry," the letter reads.

The letter continues to pledge the union's unwavering determination to fight for a union contract for dealers at the casino.

"We have no intention of staying silent, while our wages and benefits decline," the letter states. "We won't sit idly by while management blows smoke in our faces."

Indian casino revenues fall

MITCHELL, S.D. (AP) — Revenues at American Indian casinos in South Dakota dropped by 3 percent last year.

An annual report by Casino City Press and the Analysis Group indicates that the state's Indian reservation casinos had \$97.1 million in revenues in 2007, a decline of \$3 million from 2006.

It was the second straight year of falling revenues.

Analysis Group economist Alan Meister blames competition from video lottery and Deadwood casinos, as well as state-tribal compacts that restrict the number of slot machines and card tables that Indian casinos may offer.

Clash with tribe spurs effort to shut casino

By Rebecca Cathcart
New York Times

SAN JACINTO, Calif. — With 9 reservations and 10 casinos, Riverside County is a major center of Indian gambling in California.

But a standoff between county sheriff's deputies and leaders of the Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians has led to an unusual effort to close one of the casinos because of safety concerns.

Three Soboba members were killed in gunfights with deputies on the reservation in May, and the authorities say tribal members have shot at deputies in patrol cars and helicopters with high-powered assault rifles over the past nine months.

In July, citing what it called heavy-handed treatment by the Sheriff's Department, the tribe began requiring deputies entering the reservation to check in at a security gate and travel with an escort. Sheriff Stanley Sniff says the restrictions are illegal and has asked the National Indian Gaming Commission to close the Soboba casino and suspend the tribe's gambling license.

Separately, a residents group here in San Jacinto, a city that borders the reservation, has written to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger claiming that crime near the casino and restrictions on deputies violated the tribe's state gambling compact.

The residents also want the governor to reject a proposal by the tribe to add more land to its federal trust, for a second casino and for a hotel and gas station, although there is a dispute about whether the matter falls under state or federal jurisdiction.

Sheriff Sniff described the Soboba as having "a culture of violence," citing incidents of illegal weapons possession, car theft, drug possession and, most recently, gang activity, among some members.

"There is an imminent danger to the thousands of people that flow in and out of that casino," he said, "and to the people who live in communities around the reservation."

Violent crime rates on the reservation were three times higher than in surrounding cities last year, according to Sheriff's Department statistics, and 911 calls from the casino

have risen steadily since 2006. That year, the tribe canceled a contract with the department to patrol the reservation.

Members of the Soboba Tribal Council said sheriff's deputies, who have killed five Soboba in shootouts involving criminal suspects since December, have violated tribal sovereignty and made the restrictions necessary. The tribe's chairman compared the Sheriff's Department to a 19th-century frontier cavalry.

"We don't think we're above the law," said the chairman, Robert Salgado. "But we've got rights in Indian country."

In a community of under a thousand, the deaths have cut deeply, said Rose Salgado, the Tribal Council secretary and sister of Mr. Salgado. She said the tribe's crime problems were no worse than those in any other community.

"It's very emotional," she said of the killings. "There is a lot of sorrow and healing, especially for our young people."

The check-in and escort requirement for sheriff's deputies at Soboba is unprecedented in California, said James Fletcher of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Riverside. The sher-

iff's request to close the casino is a first since Indian gambling became legal in California in 1999, he said.

The National Indian Gaming Commission is looking into the request, said Shawn Pensoneau, a commission spokesman. "This issue is not resolved," Mr. Pensoneau said.

The tensions between county law enforcement officials and the Soboba reflect broad demographic changes in the eastern stretches of Riverside County, one of the state's fastest growing counties.

New homes began to fill the eastern deserts of the county in the past three years, pushing up against the Soboba and other reservations, said John Husing, a private economist in Riverside who analyzes Southern California's inland counties. The homes contribute to friction between residents and the tribe.

Mr. Fletcher, the federal official, said eight years of casino growth had been a salve for economic hardship at Soboba, but the county's population boom has brought new — and sometimes unwanted — attention to the historically insular tribe.

Relations with residents of nearby San Jacinto took a turn for the worse last year when the tribe bought a country club and golf course just beyond the reservation's border. The tribe acquired 535 acres, which it wants to transfer into federal trust. Jennie Hanks, assistant tribal administrator for Soboba, said the transfer would make the property an extension of sovereign land and allow the tribe to build a larger casino.

But residents have safety concerns. Once transferred, the land would fall under the same access restrictions placed on the Sheriff's Department, said Cheryl Schmit, founder of Stand Up for California!, an organization that advocates for communities affected by tribal gambling.

Ms. Schmit and residents from San Jacinto wrote to Mr. Schwarzenegger on Aug. 15 asking the state to determine if the tribe had violated its gambling compact by restricting law enforcement access. If the state finds evidence of a breach, she said, it could close Soboba gambling operations and delay the tribe's application to the federal government for land transfer.

Fires destroy hay

By Wes Horrocks
KIDK

FORT HALL — Thousands of dollars worth of straw has been burned in Fort Hall, and farmers are asking for your help to find out who is starting the fires.

So far there have been three different haystack fires in Fort Hall and all of them are being called suspicious. David Bingham, a Fort Hall farmer said, "You kinda worry about it. You wake up in the middle of the night and think, 'Well, gee I wonder if everything is okay.'"

For the last several weeks farmers have been cutting straw in their fields, letting it dry out, and finally bailing it up.

Over the last two days farmers in Fort Hall have had to watch as several haystacks have been lit on fire. Becky Martin, interim emergency manager for the Shosone/Bannock tribe said, "We also had a haystack fire on Eagle and Simplot [Rd.]. There also was a

fire on Marshall [Rd.], and another one on Besto [Rd.]."

Once the stacks are burning there is little that firefighters can do other than wait for it to burn out.

The exact cause of the fire is still unknown, but since one haystack can be worth \$60,000 residents hope that no new fires are started anytime soon.

Most of the straw is insured, meaning that farmers should get their money back. But the dairy's that were expecting to buy it from farmers will now have to find a new supplier. "And they're expecting you to deliver it, and if something happens to it it kinda makes you feel like your'e responsible in a way," said Bingham.

If the fires aren't stopped soon farmers may have to start taking some extra precautions. Bingham said, "It makes you want to go out and hire some surveillance equipment to have people check on it ot make sure you can catch whoever's doing it."

Hard luck puts cloud over casino group

By Scott Van Voorhis
Boston Herald

BOSTON, N.Y. — The superstar gambling investors backing the Mashpee Wampanoag tribe are feeling the sting of the economic downturn.

Waterford Group LLC Chief Executive Len Wolman and Kerzner International's Sol Kerzner, the South African business tycoons who built Mohegan Sun, are part of a team of developers backing the

Mashpee Wampanoag in the tribe's quest to build a \$1 billion resort casino in Middleboro.

Moody's Investors Service has placed the debt ratings of Waterford Gaming on review for a possible downgrade. Waterford is a partner in Trading Cove Associates, which receives a 5 percent cut of Mohegan's revenues. Moody's took similar action earlier this spring against Mohegan, which has seen slot revenue decline in a tougher economy.

Asking for help



Associated Press

Beth Wabnum, who utilizes the Kickapoo Nation Health Center facilities to treat back pain, is seen, Aug. 20, in Horton, Kan. The northeast Kansas tribe has asked the U.S. Indian Health Service for \$150,000 to help keep the clinic open through Sept. 30, the end of the current fiscal year. That's when new federal funding will begin.

Tribe member appeals verdict in lawsuit

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP) — A Narragansett Indian Tribe member who lost a lawsuit last month over a 2003 state police raid on a tribal smoke shop is appealing the jury's decision.

Adam Jennings accused Trooper Kenneth Jones of breaking his ankle during the July 2003 raid, which was carried out to block the tribe from selling tax-free cigarettes at its smoke shop in Charlestown.

But a federal jury found that Jones had not used excessive force and ruled in his favor. Jennings Tuesday filed a notice of appeal with the 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Boston.

The recent trial was the second of the lawsuit. In 2005, a federal jury awarded Jennings just over \$300,000, but a judge set aside the verdict.

A new trial was ordered after an appeal.

Shakopee tribe among giants in corporate gifts

By David Peterson
Minneapolis Star-Tribune

The Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community's charitable giving has soared to nearly \$60 million over the past two years, ranking it among the biggest sources of philanthropy in the state.

The tribe has grown wealthy from its Mystic Lake casino and other operations, and its giving is several times higher than it was just a few years ago. Its bump in giving since 2007 could end up ranking it among the top 10 grant makers in the state for 2008, alongside the likes of Cargill and Medtronic, newly released figures show.

Many of the biggest checks are going to impoverished tribes in the Dakotas. But the biggest of all -- \$12 million last year -- stayed within the state to help the University of Minnesota's new stadium and scholarship programs.

"They are one of the, if not the, most generous tribes in the nation," Ernie Stephens, chairman of the National Indian Gaming Association, said Wednesday from Denver. "Not just to surrounding communities but to Indian people in general."

People close to the tribe say it's no surprise that out-of-state tribes are getting much of the largesse, along with those clos-

er to home.

"They've been tremendously generous to Prior Lake when we've had needs, such as lights for our parks," said Jack Hauge, the mayor of the suburb in which much of the tribe's land is located. "But with some of the tribes they are helping, we're talking about the basics of life."

Millions have also been directed to native peoples within Minnesota, including two major grants that have helped to reestablish, for the Red Lake band of Chippewa, a fisheries operation that was central to the local economy until overfishing wiped out the supply, and the plant had to close.