

FROM THE PUBLISHER

Casino project moves forward

Turnout for "career information fair" shows great interest for Jemez-Anthony casino

BY DAVID E. McCOLLUM
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Whether or not Gerald Peters and the Jemez Pueblo will ever be allowed to realize their dream of building a casino in Anthony, it won't be the lack of local support that will stop them.

This past weekend, the developers of the Jemez-Anthony Casino project hosted hundreds of interested locals at three separate career information fairs, one each in Las Cruces, Mesquite and Anthony. Brief presentations were rotated every 30 minutes as the hosts outlined the various jobs and career opportunities along with career training that will be available once the casino project is approved.

Attendees ranged from unemployed to college graduates. There were even career counselors in attendance from high schools and colleges as they gathered information for their students. Generally, the participants were impressed with the presentations and the variety of jobs and career opportunities the casino will provide. The most common question asked by participants was, "What can we do to get the casino approved?"

Unfortunately, the casino will not be approved or rejected based on a public vote. The approval decision will be based on the attitudes and moods of higher political authorities. Gov. Bill Richardson has been noticeably quiet on the issue, although most everyone agrees that he will likely support the Jemez petition should it ever arrive on his desk.

The Washington guys are a different group, however. Depending on where our national priorities lie at the time of consideration, the assignment of private land to a native American group for the purpose of building a casino could be quietly approved or it could be a hot potato.

The Jemez-Anthony Casino proponents are confident that the process will continue to move forward with approvals. They have certainly worked hard to cover all the bases as they have vowed to provide infrastructure support and property taxes, along with a commitment for training and hiring local people.

Anyway you look at it, a thousand new jobs would be an economic boon to our area.

- Majority of the casino revenue will come from Texas, Mexico and interstate travelers.

- Las Cruces businesses will have the potential to reach out to casino-goers and invite them to come a bit further north and enjoy our marvelous Southwestern cuisine and lifestyle.

- The casino will put an emphasis on training and education. This will attract other businesses to locate in our area.

- Sunland Park Casino and Racetrack will benefit from the competition and exploding population base in our region over the next several years.

The only valid argument against the casino is that gambling in itself is bad. However, today's society has evolved, right or wrong, to view legal gambling as an accepted form of entertainment. And we would much rather have that type of entertainment in a controlled casino environment instead of other options such as internet gambling where unwary people are being bilked out of their money with virtually no chance of ever winning.

The winners of the Jemez-Anthony Casino Project, if it is approved, will be the residents and businesses of Doña Ana County.

If a popular vote was all that was needed, the casino would likely be approved today.

If only it could be that simple.



McCOLLUM

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