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NEWS RELEASE

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County and tribe cancel 2004 agreement over potential development

Vancouver, WA – The Board of Clark County Commissioners has voted to rescind a 2004 agreement with the Cowlitz Indian Tribe that spelled out how the tribe would pay for local services and follow county standards if the tribe received federal approval to develop 152 acres next to Interstate 5 near La Center.

“This clears the way for us to remove the cloud of expensive court battles that were putting barriers in the way of our need to apply for state funding for roads and other projects sorely needed in Clark County,” said Marc Boldt, chair of the county board.

The Cowlitz Tribal Council voted to cancel the agreement on April 4.

Prior to the 2004 agreement, the tribe applied to have the federal government remove the La Center property from state and local jurisdiction and place it in a federal trust for the economic benefit of the tribe. That request is still awaiting federal action, which is necessary to determine whether the tribe may build a casino complex at that location.

Meanwhile, opponents of a casino have sponsored a legal dispute over the 2004 agreement. The dispute questions the county's compliance with the Growth Management Act. A finding of non-compliance prevents the county from obtaining state funding for public works projects.

In 2007 the tribe adopted an “Environment, Public Health, and Safety Protection Ordinance” to explain how the tribe intends to address potential financial and environmental impacts of the proposed casino. The ordinance was incorporated into the Cowlitz Tribal Gaming Ordinance, which has received federal approval from the National Indian Gaming Commission.

Attorneys for the county will now petition the Western Washington Growth Management Hearings Board to find Clark County in compliance with the Growth Management Act and move forward with requests for state funding to benefit local residents and the economy.

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