

First Wawarsing Casino Impact Meeting Held April 24th

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On the evening of April 24, 2003, the *Ellenville-Wawarsing Chamber of Commerce* hosted a town meeting, the topic of discussion being casino gambling in our community. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the potential future of gambling in the Town of Wawarsing, primarily, what would the Modoc Indian Nation like to bring to the Town of Wawarsing.

Approximately 175-200 people listened to ten-minute presentations by panel members, followed by an opportunity for the audience to write questions to be answered by panel members. The invited panel members were asked to present any pertinent information regarding the casino topic. No restrictions were given regarding what they could or could not say.

The first panel member to speak was Assemblyman Kevin Cahill. Mr. Cahill questioned where the 3,000



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workers the Modocs would need to run their proposed project would live. The potential impact on a limited housing market would result in cost-prohibitive prices for many. He also stated that 3,000 workers could translate in 1,000 students added to our schools at a cost of nine million dollars a year. The Assemblyman emphasized his point by suggesting that higher property taxes could follow and negatively impact local communities.

Ulster County Sheriff J. Richard Bockelmann followed with his perception of what the casino impact would be. The sheriff mentioned that his research revealed crime increased only when a casino was based in a metropolitan area, not in a rural location such as in our community. Mr. Bockelmann did admit that anytime you increase the number of people in an area, certain things such as petty crime and traffic incidents would increase.



Newly-elected Ellenville Mayor Jeffrey Kaplan directed his comments towards the agreement Ulster County has already made with the Modoc Indians. The mayor challenged the county by requesting that 80 percent of the 15 million dollars the county is to receive from the Modocs each year be spent locally, where the impact will be most felt. Mr. Kaplan proposed a committee of representatives from the village, town, school district, and emergency services decide how the money would need to be spent. He also stated that the support of the local county legislators was essential to make this happen. ➔



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