



Virg Bernero, Mayor



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Nov. 1, 2012
CORRECTED VERSION

CONTACT: Randy Hannan, Office of Mayor Bernero
(517) 256-7633, rhannan@lansingmi.gov
Roger Martin, for the Sault Tribe
(517) 485-6600, rmartin@mwadvocacy.com

Mayor Bernero, Sault Tribe Chairman Payment Announce Completed Land Purchase for Casino Project

Sault Tribe Will Now Apply to Federal Government to Take Land into Trust

LANSING, Mich. —The City of Lansing and the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians today completed a critical step in their effort to win federal approval of a casino in downtown Lansing, city and tribal officials announced.

The Tribe today completed the agreement to purchase city-owned land adjacent to the Lansing Center where the casino will be built. Lansing Mayor Virg Bernero, Sault Tribe Chairperson Aaron Payment, and Bob Liggett -- owner of Big Boy restaurants across Michigan and former owner of the very successful Lansing-based radio station WFMK -- signed documents today completing the transfer of the land to the Tribe's ownership. Liggett is the main investor in the project and owns a majority of Lansing Future Development, LLC, the Sault Tribe's partner in the project.

"I'm thrilled to have this opportunity to finalize the transfer of land to the Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians, our partner in this game-changing project," Bernero said. "While we still have a long way to go, today's milestone gets us one step closer to building a project that will help boost the economic revitalization of Michigan's capital city and transform our downtown into a major entertainment destination. Our eyes are on the prize – this project will create thousands of good jobs, attract tens of thousands of tourists to the region, and generate enough revenue to allow our city to send all of our school district graduates to college through the Lansing Promise."

The Tribe will now apply to the federal government to take the land into trust, clearing the way for the construction of the \$245 million casino, which will be built in the heart of the city's entertainment district, adjacent to the Lansing Center. The 125,000-square-foot casino will create an estimated 1,500 permanent jobs at the property and more than 700 construction jobs.

"We wouldn't be to this point in the process if it wasn't for the team of professionals involved," Lansing Future Development's CEO Bill Martines said. "The city's department heads, the private professionals representing the city and the developer, and the Sault Tribe's staff, have countless hours invested. At the end of the day, this project will be successful because of the expertise and commitment from these individuals."

“This is a wonderful day for the members of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians,” Payment said. “We continue to move aggressively on this project, and we will file our land trust application as soon as possible. We are grateful to have the city and people of Lansing as partners in this important endeavor. By exercising our sovereign government’s legal right to develop a casino, we will be creating a project that will generate significant economic benefits for Sault Tribe members in addition to creating thousands of good jobs.”

The Sault Tribe has successfully operated Indian casinos in the state since 1984 and currently owns five Kewadin Casino properties in the Upper Peninsula. With more than 40,000 members, the Sault Tribe is the largest federally-recognized tribe east of the Mississippi and one of the largest job providers in Northern Michigan with 1,900 employees at its casinos, other businesses, and tribal government agencies.

The Tribe will file an application with the U.S. Department of the Interior to take the land into trust as tribal lands under a specific provision of the federal Land Claims Act that gives only the Sault Tribe the legal right to the process. The Tribe intends to open the casino after receiving federal approval.

The Tribe will use casino revenues to improve programs and services to members, including health care, education, housing, elder care, social services, and more. The City of Lansing will use its annual revenue payments from the facility to create the Lansing Promise, a program to fund four-year college scholarships for Lansing School District graduates. The land transaction completed today includes a parcel adjacent to the Lansing Center at Michigan Avenue and Larch, which the Tribe acquired for a total cost of \$280,000, plus \$9,000 in closing costs. The purchase price reflects the full fair market value of the land. The agreement between the city and Tribe is for the Tribe to close on the other two other parcels of land over time at a price already agreed to by all parties, assuming all approvals for the project are secured.

Plans for the casino include up to 3,000 slot machines and 48 table games, and assorted bars and restaurants in an urban modern-themed property. The project has been approved by the Lansing City Council, the Sault Tribe Board of Directors, and the Sault Tribe membership in a tribal referendum held earlier this year.

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