The proposed Catawba Indian Nation casino in Kings Mountain, N.C., could carry the nationally recognized Hard Rock brand name, say tribal leaders.

Catawba Chief Bill Harris said Friday the tribe is in discussions with Hard Rock International, which operates two casino resorts for the Seminole tribe in Florida.

A spokesman for Hard Rock International declined to comment on the discussions. “It is the policy of Hard Rock to keep all potential business deals confidential, therefore we cannot confirm or deny any speculation,” a spokesman said in an email to The Herald.

Wallace Cheves of Sky Boat LLC, the tribe’s development partner in the proposed casino, said “multiple people worldwide” have approached his company about branding the proposed Catawba casino. He declined to comment on discussions with the Seminoles.

At a meeting Thursday night of the tribe’s economic development board and its executive council, the Seminole tribe’s interest in the Kings Mountain project was discussed, tribal leaders said.

Harris said getting the right branding, especially one such as the Hard Rock and the Seminoles, would be a significant advantage for the Catawba. Harris said the Seminoles are the “gold standard” for tribal gaming operations and that the Catawba could be able to plug into that experience and benefit “from all the things they have already done.”

Harris said that while the Catawbas believe their North Carolina casino project has credibility on its own merits, interest by the Seminole tribe “would be a gift” that would give the project an economic development and political boost.

The addition of a national brand such as Hard Rock Casino could also answer questions from the federal Bureau of Indian affairs, Harris said. The tribe has a pending application before the bureau to place 16 acres in Kings Mountain in a federal trust for the tribe.

If the land were placed in the trust, the tribe could move ahead with plans for a 1.8-million square-foot facility that would have a casino and hotel. The estimated cost of the project is about $600 million and the complex could employ as many as 4,000 people.

North Carolina Gov. Pat McCrory and other Tar Heel officials have opposed the Catawba plan.

The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians operates the only Indian casino in North Carolina, Harrah's Cherokee, located near the Tennessee border. The Cherokees have made political contributions to McCrory and other North Carolina politicians, Democrats and Republicans.

One of the concerns expressed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs is who would regulate the gaming at the casino, Harris said.

As part of its 1993 settlement with the federal government and South Carolina, the Catawba Indian Nation agreed not to place itself under the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, which regulates the conduct of gaming on Indian lands. The act established the National Indian Gaming Commission and a regulatory structure for Indian gaming in the United States.

Having a branding arrangement with the Seminoles should help answer the question about regulation, Harris said.

The branding initiatives are part of a continuing effort by the Catawba to create more partnerships among native American tribes, Harris said. When the tribe opened its Rock Hill bingo hall on Cherry Road in spring 2014, it turned to the Lumbee Indians as its contractors to renovate a former grocery store.

Recent discussions about locating a film studio on the Catawba Indian reservation have also included talks with other tribes, including the Senecas of western New York, Harris said last week.

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