

'It will hurt us really hard,' tribe's chief says of governor's rejection of proposed casino

Written by Administrator
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GRAND RAPIDS, MI -- Larry Romanelli, Ogema of the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians, is obviously disappointed by Governor Whitmer's decision to reject the tribe's proposed casino in Muskegon County.

He expressed his disappointment and the [potential options for the 233 acres the tribe owns in](#) and around where the casino would have been built during an interview last week with MLive/Muskegon Chronicle.

"It's a big detriment to us," Romanelli said about Gov. Whitmer's rejection of the casino. "We have to now refocus and re-look at how we almost survive in some ways."

"We're not going to fold up and go away as a tribe, but it will hurt us really hard. It really will," Romanelli added later in the interview. "We've worked really hard and we've done everything right, and that's what the sad part is."

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's decision was announced Wednesday, June 15 that put a stop to the pursuit to develop the \$180 million casino-centered project. The proposal, which has been in the planning stages for nearly 14 years, also called for a 220-room hotel on the land in Fruitport Township near I-96 and The Lakes Mall.

The U.S. Department of Interior signed off on the request in December 2020, but the off-reservation casino also needed approval from the governor.

The Little River Band of Ottawa Indians operates another casino on tribal land in Manistee. The tribe said it has invested \$30 million in the development plans of the Fruitport site.

Whitmer opted against giving her stamp of approval. In a statement, she cited another West Michigan tribe, the Grand River Bands of Ottawa Indians, that is seeking to be officially recognized by the U.S. Department of Interior.

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The Grand River Bands claims the property eyed for the casino is part of its ancestral homelands. If the tribe receives federal acknowledgement, it could seek to build its own casino.

Read More:

[Muskegon leaders, politicians and more decry Whitmer's casino rejection](#)

[Without casino, what will tribe do with 233 acres? Development or selling are on the table](#)

[Gov. Whitmer rejects 14-year long push to build Muskegon area casino](#)

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