

Response to column written by Grady Gammage, Jr. in the Arizona Republic on Aug. 28

An attorney for the Tohono O'odham Indian Tribe recently submitted a column to the Arizona Republic regarding some "perceived rhetoric" on behalf of the city. The column failed to inform the reader on several key issues. It also made assumptions that, quite simply, are not true. The city believes it is important that all sides of this issue be properly communicated to the public. Disparagement of the city's effort to inform the public is not justifiable.

First, it should be understood that the city has, in fact, met with the Tribe.

On the day the Tribe filed the application, the Tribe and its public relations firm met with Glendale's Mayor. This meeting was arranged at the repeated insistence of the Tribe's public relations firm who would provide no information prior to the meeting about its purpose and provided the Mayor with no notice that the Tribe would attend. Obviously, it came as a great surprise to the Mayor when the Tribe informed her for the first time that it was that day asking the federal government to turn land completely within the exterior boundaries of Glendale into an Indian reservation. At that meeting, the Tribe refused to provide substantive information about their project.

Other council members have met with the Tribe. The Vice Mayor and Council Member Frate meet with the Tribe in May. Again, the Tribe refused to provide detailed information about their project, deferring discussions, as it did with the Mayor, until the Tribe's reservation was created.

City staff met with the Tribe in a separate meeting. Despite repeated requests before the meeting for specific information about the Tribe's proposal, the Tribe provided nothing meaningful to staff during the meeting. In fact, when requested to provide specific information about plans, construction timelines, designs, etc., the Tribe again stated that all meaningful discussion would have to occur after the reservation was created. When asked for specific information about the Tribe much touted economic development study, the Tribe refused to provide that information.

It is also important to understand the Tribe's application to the US Secretary of the Interior is pending. It has been reported that the Bureau of Indian Affairs "approved" the Tribe's request for the reservation. That is incorrect. Several very significant legal questions remain unanswered by the Department of Interior. The city believes that the Tribe's application to create a reservation does not meet the requirements imposed by Congress.

Additionally, while the parcel the Tribe has owned in another name for six years is partially a county island, it is completely surrounded by the City of Glendale and within the city's exterior boundaries. It has always been in the City's General Plan and incorporated into the city's water and wastewater regional plan. Most of the roadways leading to the site will be the city's responsibility; for the cost of construction, improvement, and maintenance.

The editorial favoring the Tohono O'odham's proposal also mentions the casino near Scottsdale as a representative of the Tohono O'odham's proposal. The casinos of the Ft. McDowell Yavapai Nation, the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, the Gila River Indian Community, and the Ak-Chin Indian Community are all near municipalities. The reservations of those tribes have existed generally before Arizona was a state. The communities around those reservations grew with the full knowledge of the location of the reservation. The Tohono O'odham's proposal, on this other hand, is to create a new reservation, where none existed, and in a location that has a substantial impact on an existing

community and governmental entities. While the economic benefits of tribal casinos for the tribes have been well-established, the benefits of tribal casinos to surrounding communities are the subject of significant dispute.

So much is being said in the public realm by those with little or no stake in the community that will be impacted the greatest by this issue. These parties for the most part, are not a resident of the City; are not one of the 34,000 individuals who chose to live within two miles of the site—far from any reservation and casino and without any expectation of that fact ever changing. Undoubtedly they have no interest in one of the 670 businesses in that area who employ over 10,000 people; businesses who never expected competition from an entity that claims exemption from laws, pays no taxes or fees, has infrastructure demands that must be paid by others, and who has a monopoly on the activity that draws, holds and intentionally drains as much as possible from consumers. And has no obligation, as do Glendale's elected officials, to protect the interests and future of its citizens.