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Mohegan Tribe To Forge Ahead Without Casino Partner

By Scott Ritter

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The Mohegan Tribe will be the sole developer of a proposed \$808 million Wisconsin casino, taking the reins after its partner, a prominent Kenosha businessman, was indicted on charges of fraud and making a false statement to the FBI.

Mohegan Tribal Chairman Bruce “Two Dogs” Bozsum said Friday that the tribe is buying out millionaire Dennis Troha's partnership interest in the development of a tribal casino at the Dairyland Greyhound Track in Kenosha.

He said the Mohegans won't look for a new partner, but will instead use its own expertise to build the casino for the Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin. The Kenosha project recently won the blessing of a regional Bureau of Indian Affairs office, and awaits other state and federal approvals.

Bozsum met Friday with leaders of the Menominee tribe, and said they were “very excited” that the Mohegans will take full control of the planning and development of the casino. Under a 2004 agreement, the Mohegan Tribe would manage the casino for seven years in exchange for 13.4 percent of net revenues.

“They've seen our facility here,” Bozsum said, referring to the tribe's Mohegan Sun, one of the nation's largest casinos. “They know our team and they know it will be a great project still.”

Menominee Chairwoman Lisa Waukau was traveling Friday and could not be reached for comment, her office said. In a statement Thursday, she called Troha an “upstanding and honest person.”

“It is important to note that our tribe is not involved in this case, and our focus remains on the positive forward momentum of our Kenosha casino proposal,” she said.

A federal grand jury in Milwaukee indicted Troha on Thursday, accusing him of funneling more than \$100,000 in campaign contributions to Democratic Gov. Jim Doyle and others through family members and a business entity since 2002. He then lied about the transactions to FBI agents, the indictment alleged.

Gov. Doyle must approve the proposed casino. Both Doyle and Troha have denied that the donations had anything to do with the project.

Troha's attorney, in a statement, said the businessman's actions were "legal and responsible" and said he would be exonerated in court. Troha, 60, faces up to 25 years in prison and a fine of up to \$500,000 if convicted.

Evan Zeppos, a spokesman for the casino project, said the Mohegans have reached an agreement to buy out Troha's casino development firm, Kanesh Gaming Development LLC. Details have not been released.

Zeppos said the indictment would likely put the project under greater scrutiny. Still, he said, that could be a good thing because "it'll show that the project's got a very sound business plan; that it's got a very good operating plan."

He said support for the Kenosha casino remains strong among state and local elected officials.