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Lyttons to unveil revised San Pablo casino plan

**By Karl Fischer**  
**CONTRA COSTA TIMES**

**SAN PABLO** - The Lytton Band of Pomo Indians will unveil next month a "revised, scaled-down" proposal for transmogrifying the local card room into a full-fledged Indian gaming hall, tribal officials said Friday.

The Indian band operating Casino San Pablo offered no specifics, other than that the new plan involves neither a hotel nor a high-rise development.

Lytton representatives and San Pablo officials summoned media to City Hall to announce that the new plan would be released within 30 days and refute recent claims that most locals oppose the casino's proposed makeover into a 2,500-slot machine gambling center.

"Unfortunately, our proposal has been lumped in with other Bay Area proposals" for Indian casinos, Lytton chairwoman Margie Mejia said. "Our casino will not be a Las Vegas-type establishment dropped into the middle of San Pablo."

The pronouncements came just before legislators begin an apparent assault on the casino project.

Today, Assemblywoman Loni Hancock, D-Berkeley, will hold a hearing at Contra Costa College to discuss the issue of urban Indian gaming and Casino San Pablo, particularly. Earlier this week she released results of an informal survey showing strong opposition to the project.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein plans on Monday to introduce a bill to repeal a brief piece of legislation Rep. George Miller, D-Martinez, inserted into a 2000 bill that ordered the casino to become the Lytton's reservation.

"If the good senator were to come down and talk to the community, she would find out that (the casino expansion) does have a lot of support in the community," said Jack Gribbon, state political director of Unite Here, the union representing casino workers.

Feinstein's bill would force the Lyttons to follow the 1988 Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, which codified a more stringent process for tribes seeking to build casinos, according to spokesman Scott Gerber.

"I have serious concerns about the expansion of Nevada-style gaming -- with its slot machines and in-house banking -- into urban areas," Feinstein wrote in a press statement

Friday. "This legislation is designed to prevent the Lytton Band of Pomo Indians from short-circuiting the process laid out in the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act for gaming on newly acquired lands."

Feinstein introduced a similar bill in 2003 that was consigned to committee where it died without a hearing.

Nearly all residents either heartily support or deeply despise the casino plan, according to conflicting reports from elected officials.

Count San Pablo Mayor Joe Gomes in the "support" camp.

"There isn't any controversy," he said. "The overwhelming majority of people in my city think the casino proposal is a good thing, period."

A 1,700-signature petition of residents and local businesses supporting the Lytton plan was released at the press conference, "conclusive proof that there is support for this casino in the city of San Pablo," Gomes said.

Hancock, an opponent of the casino expansion, conducted her own survey and found that voters in the region disapproved of the plan 9-to-1, according to results released this week. Fewer than 4 percent of the 252,000 registered voters in her district responded to the mail survey.

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## **IF YOU GO**

- **WHAT:** Community forum on Casino San Pablo expansion
- **WHEN:** 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. today
- **WHERE:** Contra Costa College John Knox Theater for Performing Arts, El Portal Drive and Castro Street, San Pablo.
- **WHO:**

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*Assemblywoman Loni Hancock, local politicians, community members and policy experts.*