



# The Post-Standard

## Cayuga County delays vote on Indian issues

**The state wants to know whether legislators support proposed land/casino deals.**

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Staff writer

State officials will have to wait two weeks before they hear how Cayuga County feels about the proposed settlements to the Cayuga Indian land claim.

That's because the county Legislature balked at voting on the casino/land claim deals Tuesday night after hearing a 35-minute presentation from the two architects of the pending agreements. The vote is to be Jan. 25.

Lawmakers said they had yet to resolve some sticking points for them, including nagging questions about a price parity proposal and whether the leadership dispute within the Cayuga Indian Nation of New York would sink the deal. Four legislators missed the meeting, and their absences would have counted as negative votes, too.

"I think that (the deal is) too big a giveaway," said David Pappert, R-Auburn.

"The nation is going to get land, they're going to get a casino and they're going to get an end to their uncertainty. . . . It's too big a plum to give away in consideration of what we're getting," Pappert said.

Separate deals struck last November would give the Cayugas and the Seneca-Cayuga Tribe of Oklahoma lucrative casino rights in the Catskills in exchange for dropping their respective shares of the \$247.9 million Cayuga Indian land claim judgment.

Greg Allen and John O'Mara, counsels to Gov. George Pataki, outlined both proposed agreements and responded to questions. Allen and O'Mara negotiated the deals, which require approval from Congress and the state Legislature.

O'Mara said he expects state and federal legislation will be introduced "very quickly" and that the state is interested in knowing how Cayuga and Seneca counties feel about the proposed settlements.

Allen said the concept of price parity is to ensure that American Indian businesses charge prices on retail products and services that are equivalent to prices of merchandise sold at non-Indian businesses. Currently, New York state Indians refuse to collect or remit sales tax on their merchandise, which gives them a competitive advantage over non-Indian businesses, Allen said.

Pappert questioned how the state could effectively manage the price parity program.

Allen and O'Mara said the state believes it has a deal with the Cayugas despite their leadership squabble between Clint Halftown, the nation's recognized spokesman, and the nation's governing council.

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