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Nisqually Indian Tribe to dedicate safety complex Nisqually facility includes 288-bed jail, offices for law enforcement

By ROLF BOONE

rboone@theolympian.com February 21, 2014

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The Nisqually Indian Tribe on Friday will dedicate the first phase of the Nisqually Public Safety Complex, a \$20 million facility that includes a 288-bed detention building to serve the tribe and other regional jurisdictions.

The dedication ceremony, which includes tours and lunch, is set for 10 a.m. at 11702 Yelm Highway SE, Olympia.

The first phase of the complex, which also includes space for tribal law enforcement, will employ about 80, such as corrections officers and administrative and maintenance staff, Nisqually Tribal Chairwoman Cynthia Iyall said Thursday.

The corrections portion of the complex is expected to open after the dedication ceremony, although an exact date wasn't immediately known, she said.

"I'm very proud of the tribe for embracing the opportunities for growth," Iyall said about the complex.

In addition to the complex, the tribe recently completed work on a youth and community center, a new tribal center and work is underway on expanding Red Wind Casino.

Iyall said the safety complex was viewed as controversial by some neighbors, but she hopes they can show the community the kind of work and valuable community partner they can be. "I believe in our people," she said.

The Lacey Police Department is one of several jurisdictions that will use the new jail to detain misdemeanor offenders; felony offenders are sent to the Thurston County Jail, Chief Dusty Pierpoint said.

"We've always had a great relationship with the tribe and jail and I don't expect anything different with the new facility," he said.

The Lacey City Council recently approved a new, three-year agreement to house misdemeanor offenders in the Nisqually jail.

Construction took about a year, but in that time several residents in the area voiced their opposition to the project, feeling caught off guard by the complex and concerned about its effect on property values, safety and traffic, or that the new county jail — the Accountability and Restitution Center — still sits empty.

"Instead of jumping on the matter like they (the commissioners) did with the pocket gopher, they could have just said 'no' as soon as they found out and stopped the Nisqually jail in its tracks," Paul Capra of Olympia wrote in a letter to The Olympian last year.

But Commissioner Sandra Romero replied in her own letter that it's not that simple.

"The county cannot regulate what happens on sovereign tribal trust land," she said.

Questions about the complex finally resulted in the county creating a fact sheet about the complex and posting it online.

Here is some information from the fact sheet:

- The new jail will house inmates arrested on Nisqually land and misdemeanor offenders from other area tribes and non-tribal jurisdictions, including Lacey, Tumwater, Yelm and Rainier.
- The site has the potential to expand to 576 beds.
- The project is being funded by a grant from the U.S. Justice Department and a low-interest loan from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The tribe applied for the grant in 2009.

Nisqually Police Chief Joe Kautz, whose office already is set up in the new complex, said the tribe's existing 90-bed jail will remain open, but will be used in a different capacity.

Prior to the new jail, the existing jail was often at capacity and sometimes crowded, he said.

Rolf Boone: 360-754-5403 rboone@theolympian.com

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