

Statement of Palm Springs Together -- January 9, 2020

We live in Palm Springs, and we love Palm Springs. We want everyone to get along, to be successful, and for our city and the Tribal nation to thrive.

What's offensive about this situation is how greedy and dishonest the Tribe is being relative to the arena project.

As we've said, an arena is a reasonable use for this site, but an 11,000 seat arena is neither necessary to support entertainment and sports, nor good for the environment and the community. A smaller arena in the downtown core would be more suitable, with fewer negative impacts. Or a larger arena could be accommodated by the 10 freeway. The Tribe's insistence on a too-big-to-succeed arena in the downtown core is offensive.

The Tribe is being dishonest in two significant ways. First, they are piecemealing review of this project from the other components of their master plan because they don't want the cumulative impacts to be recognized. This is a case where two plus two plus two equals 20. The cultural center now under construction, the arena, the hotel to come, the casino ... they all would be adjacent. They would share parking and other facilities and amenities. Each piece of the master plan stimulates more demand for the other. They are the same project, and the cumulative impacts should be recognized.

Second, to anyone who lives or visits here, the nexus between the entertainment arena and gaming is crystal clear. But the Tribe denies the reality. The arena will drive massive traffic to the gaming center. Many people will park at the gaming center in order to attend an event at the arena, and vice versa. People will walk through the casino on the way in and out of the arena, it's plain as day. Thus, the arena is subject to the environmental requirements of the gaming compact. By either the fair argument standard or the substantial evidence standard, there's sufficient compelling basis to require a Tribal Environmental Impact Report in this case.

The Tribe's environmental document, the city's staff report and recommendations, and other documents on the record substantiate this argument.

One issue in particular gnaws at us: the lack of a VMT traffic analysis of this project. The state of California adopted VMT as the standard for measuring environmental impacts of traffic precisely because of projects JUST LIKE THIS ONE. This is not an infill project in Los Angeles or San Francisco that disturbs LOS but creates barely a blip in net-new VMT. And this is not a typical urban or regional arena like the ones cited in the Tribe's traffic study. This is a gaming, entertainment, cultural and hotel master-planned mega-development that creates a major destination real estate project that does not now exist. It's going to stimulate thousands of net-new VMT trips from origins all over Southern California, with pollution impacts that need to be measured and, if the project moves forward as planned, mitigated. There should be a Tribal Environmental Impact Report.