

Use of the word scheme in the headline — instead of proposal — with regard to a casino being touted by James A. Traficant Jr., former area congressman and a convicted felon, reflects our belief that the idea is nothing more than a house of cards. It won't come to fruition because it's based on a faulty premise: That an Indian tribe not indigenous to Ohio will somehow

secure permission from the state and federal governments to build the gambling establishment in Mahoning County.

Given that, county commissioners Anthony Traficanti and John McNally and the trustees in Jackson Township are absolutely right in not succumbing to pressure from Traficant to quickly approve his scheme. The notion that the transfer of ownership of 20-plus acres of land in North Jackson to two Indian nations for \$1 somehow proves commitment and credibility is vintage Traficant.

His bullying tactics show that his seven years and one month in the federal penitentiary failed to teach him humility. He came out of prison just as he went in, an arrogant, egotistical individual who was not swayed by his conviction by a federal jury of 10 criminal charges, including racketeering, bribery and tax evasion. In a nutshell, he used his public position as congressman from the 17th District for personal gain.

Now, he wants the area to embrace his half-baked scheme for a casino, hotel, convention center and a bank, and is demanding support from elected officials. Traficant has formed Traficant Co. LLC, with his wife, Patricia, as the business agent, and claims to have facilitated the land transfer from Athena D. Bialik and John A. Papadopoulos to Winston Mason, a trustee of Itana (Indigenous Tribal Affiliates of Native America) of Utah and Munsee Delaware Indian Nation in Cambridge, Ohio. That's window dressing, nothing to be taken seriously.

It would be an entirely different proposition had Traficant first found a legally solid solution to what remains a major impediment to Indian casinos in Ohio.

As Ted Hart, a spokesman for Ohio Attorney General Richard Cordray, noted, only federally-recognized tribes can apply for a federal gaming license, and there are no federally recognized tribes in Ohio.

Traficant is pushing the idea that if the county commissioners and the Jackson Township trustees pass resolutions in support of his scheme, he and his associates, the Itana and the Munsee, would be able to use that support to petition the federal government for tribal recognition.

Slew of issues

But as commissioners Traficanti and McNally — their colleague David Ludt, who will be leaving office in December, is backing Traficant's idea — and the Jackson Township trustees correctly pointed out, there are a slew of other issues that need to be addressed.

For instance, since Indian tribes do not pay taxes, how will the county and the township cover the government costs that will inevitably result from the development of the casino complex?

Traficant, who is on Tuesday's ballot as an independent candidate for 17th District congressman, is not going to steam roller responsible elected officials.

His scheme lacks credibility — just as he does.

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