

KCK casino hopes to open amid legal battle

Kansas City, Kansas – A casino involved in a legal battle is almost done with its remodeling and set to open.

The remodeling is mixing the building's green marble pillars and other original fixtures with new features such as slot parlors and a restaurant that seats 125 guests.

„It's just like walking back into the 1920s,“ said David McCullough, an Oklahoma City attorney and tribal general counsel.

The remodeling cost for the 7th Street Casino is now estimated at USD 20 million.

The long-dormant and deteriorating Masonic structure in downtown Kansas City, Kan., once housed the Scottish Rite Temple and dates back to 1906. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983, and the Oklahoma-based Wyandotte Nation bought it in 1996.

McCullough has been at the center of the Wyandottes' legal battle with the state over gambling since the mid-1990s.

The 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals last week threw out the state's latest challenge to the tribe's right to operate a casino at the site. However, the ruling – on a technicality – left the matter open and the state could essentially restart its case.

„There's nothing the state can do to keep us from opening,“ McCullough said.

If he's right, the casino could open as early as December, but more likely in early 2008, tribal officials said.

However, if the state is able to revive its case, the casino could be years from opening.

And if that happens, McCullough said the tribe would seek to have the state post a high bond guaranteeing its potential financial losses, estimated at USD 5 million a month.

The renovated building is 20,000 square feet and would initially have 400 Class II electronic wagering games that are a variation of bingo and are not slot machines.

The area's other casinos are in Missouri, which allows casino gambling on riverboats. The smallest area riverboat casino has a 45,300-square-foot gaming floor and about 1,500 slots.

McCullough said the tribe requested formal talks with Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius in July to negotiate terms of a compact with the state allowing table games and traditional slot machines.

The talks probably won't happen any time soon.