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Mill Bay resort owner pushes buyout: Members vow fight to keep leases; company says it's losing money

By Milagros Lujan, World staff writer

CHELAN -- The owner of **Mill Bay Resort** Park has offered to buy out park members who are refusing to give up the remaining 30-plus years on their membership contracts.

WORLD GRAPHIC
MAP BY CHERYL
GRAHAM
SHOWING
LOCATION OF
RESORT AREA

Chief Evans Inc. sent out letters on June 24 offering \$25,000 to members with lifetime memberships and \$2,500 to those who bought temporary memberships at the **resort** park on Lake Chelan. The company claims to be losing money, but park members speculate the company wants to clear the way for a casino and hotel.

A buyout of the nearly 200 members would end a dispute that began in early 2001 when Chief Evans announced plans to close the park. Residents contend they have years left on their paid memberships.

"It's absurd, we don't want to sell," said Paul Grondal of Issaquah, a spokesman for the members who met July 6 to discuss the buyout offer.

"It's an illusionary promise, it's a poll to see how many members will sell out," said Frank Smith, park member and attorney for all members.

The letters from Chief Evans Inc. also state that if the park continues to operate, it will be moved to a site above the golf course.

Grondal said that can't happen because the membership contracts they signed stated that if the RV park were moved, it would have to be moved to an area equal to or better than the current site.

"There is nothing equal to where we are and there is nothing better. We have the best spot," Grondal said.

Grondal said expanded members have about 30 years left on the membership contract. He said at the July meeting members unanimously agreed that they have no intent of giving in to Chief Evans Inc. He also said they are offering less than what the properties are worth.

"Members are going to fight," he said. "We want what we paid for: 31 years on the lease they committed themselves to."

The case is now a legal struggle involving the state Attorney General's Office, which was investigating the dispute when Chief Evans Inc. sued in Colville Tribal Court to block the investigation.

The [Mill Bay Resort](#) Web site states, "The lawsuit was to seek relief from the AG's (Attorney General's) investigation on the premise that the Colville Tribal Court has jurisdiction -- not the Washington State Attorney General."

A hearing on the lawsuit is scheduled for Aug. 13. Smith said all members plan to attend and voice their concerns.

Bob Lipson, assistant attorney general with the Consumer Affairs Division, said the attorney general will be present at the hearing. Lipson said he is not sure what the role of the attorney general will be after the tribal court makes its decision.

Richard Price, an Omak attorney for Chief Evans Inc., said documents showing that Chief Evans Inc. is losing money have been given to the members of the park. He said Chief Evans Inc. approached members with the idea to increase maintenance management fees and the members opposed that idea.

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