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AQUINNAH'S VINEYARD PLANS SEEN AS "BIG CURVEBALL" ON GAMBLING FRONT By Michael Norton and Matt Murphy STATE HOUSE NEWS SERVICE STATE HOUSE, BOSTON, NOV. 12, 2013.....As news spread Tuesday morning about plans for a tribal gaming facility on Martha's Vineyard, the House and Senate gave final approval to a separate tribal gaming compact that's critical to casino development in Taunton. Both branches gave final approval votes to the compact negotiated between Gov. Deval Patrick and the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, sending the compact resolve to Patrick's desk. Patrick and the tribe signed the compact in March and while it was not subject to amendment and had significant support in both branches, it took months for the pact to move through the Legislature. On Tuesday morning, the Aquinnah tribe announced it had secured federal approvals to open a Class II gaming facility on its existing Indian lands on the Vineyard, a surprise development that further complicates the expanded gambling picture in the southeastern Massachusetts region where the amount of state revenues from a Taunton casino are contingent on the level of gambling competition in the region.

Apprised of the Aquinnah's claims, Senate Majority Leader Stanley Rosenberg told the News Service late Tuesday morning, "Are you serious? I'm speechless. After everything and all we've been working on, this comes as a huge surprise." Rosenberg was the point person in the Senate on expanded gaming legislation signed by Gov. Deval Patrick in November 2011 authorizing up to three resort casinos in Massachusetts and one slots parlor. Rosenberg said he agreed with the Patrick administration's previous refusal to negotiate a gaming compact with the Aquinnah tribe, believing that the tribe had forfeited

its tribal gaming rights in exchange for other benefits when tribal land in trust on the island was acquired. The Aquinnah asserts the administration's refusal to negotiate is based on a "mistaken belief" about the tribe's rights. "This is a real big curveball," Rosenberg said. "This is definitely a big curveball. Oh, my goodness. I have to go do some reading really fast. I could not have anticipated this. Today is not April Fool's right? May we live in interesting times," Rosenberg said. A Patrick administration official said the administration had not received a copy of the ruling by the National Indian Gaming Commission, and was not aware of a request from the Aquinnah to open compact negotiations. The Aquinnah - the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head - reported Tuesday that the National Indian Gaming Commission had on Nov. 1 acknowledged its facility license for the Aquinnah site. "The Tribe has consistently asserted that we have the right to game on our lands in Aquinnah," tribal chair Cheryl Andrews-Maltais said in a statement. "These approvals affirm our position. We are thrilled!"

According to the Aquinnah, Class II gaming is regulated solely by the tribe and the NIGC and includes "a variety of machine games, bingo and poker." Casino gaming is considered Class III gaming. The tribe plans to move ahead with plans to convert an unfinished community center in Aquinnah into a temporary gaming facility, and Andrews-Maltais said its gaming facility would "blend in with the rest of the island" and the tribe would work with local businesses. The tribe indicated Tuesday that had also renewed its request to negotiate a Class III gaming compact with Patrick. The administration as recently as March declined to negotiate with the Aquinnah. Voters in Freetown and Lakeville earlier this year rejected the Aquinnah tribe's pursuit of a casino on non-tribal land not located on the island of Martha's Vineyard. END 11/12/2013