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## Casino designed with expansion in mind

The Business Journal of Milwaukee - by [Megan Hupp](#)

**Bob Fenlon**, senior project executive for the [Potawatomi Bingo Casino](#) expansion, has spent much of his career working on commercial and industrial construction projects. When Fenlon, 51, was hired on at [Gilbane Construction](#) in March 1998 to complete the first expansion project at Potawatomi, he began his sojourn into construction of entertainment venues.

After managing water storage and deep tunnel projects for the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District, Fenlon has returned to building entertainment venues, heading up the \$240 million Potawatomi expansion. Fenlon answered questions from Business Journal reporter Megan Hupp about the challenges he faced overseeing the expansion, which had its grand opening on June 19.



Scott Paulus

Bob Fenlon . . . "To safely get the patrons and employees through the construction site was the biggest challenge and the biggest accomplishment of the entire project."

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### 1. How does Potawatomi compare to other projects you've worked on?

"The first Potawatomi expansion was my first venture into the entertainment area. This was a design and build, fast-track project. For me it was extremely exciting, rewarding and educational to learn not only about high-end finishes and themed elements, but also the Indian gaming industry and its compliance requirements. The project has not slowed down since day one. Peak daily employment on the project topped 500 tradespersons. Scheduling, organizing and delivering on a project of this complexity can sometimes be a daunting task, but the team we have has risen to the occasion."

### 2. What are the challenges of a project that includes so many aspects of entertainment, from gaming to restaurants and bars?

"In one word, education. You have to educate yourself on the details of the various venues and how they integrate into the overall project. The team also needs to understand the owner's operations to minimize conflicts with ongoing business."

### 3. Was the project constructed or designed with future expansion in mind?

"Yes. As a matter of fact, the initial casino expansion also incorporated design features for future expansion. For example, the original parking deck south of the building was constructed at the same elevation as the James E. Groppi Memorial Bridge to someday allow a connection for better traffic flow. The present expansion incorporated the construction of the floor above the casino area. Even though this area is not being completed as part of the present contract, it was far cheaper to complete the superstructure work now versus at a later date."

#### **4. Of what part of the project are you most proud?**

"This project is about construction, but Gilbane had to construct the expansion around an existing, ongoing operation that has more than 4.5 million visitors annually. To safely get the patrons and employees through the construction site was the biggest challenge and the biggest accomplishment of the entire project."

#### **5. What did the Potawatomi expansion project teach you?**

"The same thing all projects have taught me: It takes a team to complete the project. No one person can accomplish the task by themselves. We need to support and encourage each other every day."

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