

Greektown update, drug addiction, testing issues



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I would like to start by bringing you up to date on the Greektown lawsuit case of our threat of being sued for the \$177 million. As you know, many leaders played a part in all the actions and inactions of the business endeavor in Detroit; there is plenty of blame and finger pointing to go around for all of us, including myself.

In many past reports, I have attempted to educate and explain my position when we filed bankruptcy and also keep the focus on moving forward after the decisions. When I was elected, we had extreme debt and turmoil, only two board members seated at the management board level and the debt was hundreds of millions. We could not sustain the management structure, our information and oversight was limited. We had unreasonable and unreachable demands with the city for payments and all the NON-tribal players had their positions solid.

What once was a revenue-generating dream for us turned into something that we could not sustain through bad decisions, game playing, politics and inexperience through leadership. I've always taken responsibility for the outcome and will continue; the path was laid and the people in place in our government just couldn't secure the future of that endeavor. I stand behind the decision I made to file bankruptcy and my true hope was that we could move forward without the cloud and debt and remain moving forward in our northern businesses.

The update this far is we are a small step closer to making

that happen, with the Greektown experience anyway. Last August, the bankruptcy court ruled against us on sovereign immunity motion. The bankruptcy judge ruled that Section 106 of the Bankruptcy Code, which abrogates the immunity of domestic governments, applies to Indian tribes and abrogates our tribe's sovereign immunity. We then appealed to a district court, which reversed the bankruptcy judge's decision. The court found that, because Section 106 did not specifically refer to Indian tribes, it did not abrogate our immunity. This is the small step we hoped for at this point — we have not won and we foresee an appeal but we are prepared through our Legal Department. We have strong, solid arguments and I'm confident of our legal team.

I've given this update so that you all know that my priority is to still move forward; I have spoken about the Greektown decision often and accepted responsibility for the lack of seeing that project benefit us. I've sat through many meetings and arguments watching the finger pointing and lack of accountability on leaders' parts and think to myself, you were there (only a couple board members seated now had no role). Most of us had a role and still do if we are at the table. To not learn from that mess and use it to play games is unacceptable; we have that going on as usual. I don't like to write about this, but an update about the threat of lawsuit is needed. I'm grateful to our Legal Department for their professionalism and direction on this because leadership sometimes some can't see the forest for the trees on this one. Seeing it through for the best outcome for our tribe is imperative to me at this point. We are also still paying the 12 percent to the Land Claims Fund for interest on the loan and this did not stop nor will the loan be forgotten.

We held a very good TAP meeting this last month. I was extremely impressed with the structure and agenda of the meeting and also the outcome for the direction we are now moving in. We only had two board members, Director Gravelle and myself. Director Sorenson was out of town on tribal business and the

other board members obligated to attend didn't. It's disheartening, because finally we get our staff committed and working hard and then our own commitment waivers. This is another priority I've written about and stated updates will be constant.

We evaluated the focus group and community meetings input, worked toward vision and mission statements to place in perspective what the group needed to accomplish and department staff gave input on what they envisioned for the goals and service to members. Leaving the meeting was good as we shortened the time before we would meet again, instead of a month we planned to meet in two weeks to get started on the actual creation of the plan.

When I was at the Tribal Self-Governance Conference, I had the opportunity to speak directly to Robert McSwain (acting director of IHS) in an input session. I spoke about our tribal action plan project; I reminded him it was the first in the nation and requested that he personally read this when it does make it through the process. This can educate him on the needs through IHS as well as a stepping-stone for other tribes. Our drug addiction problems aren't getting better; we have lose policies through our workplace that only hurt our members. We have in place pre-employment drug tests, random drug tests and reasonable suspicion testing. Recently, I placed on our agenda at a meeting to "eliminate random drug testing in the workforce." I absolutely agree with pre-employment and reasonable suspicion. My position on this is that we have had recent events take place at our board level that called this in question. Team members contacted me especially about the issues. I won't write about it here, but this calls the random testing into question — who is randomly tested, privacy of team members, etc. After speaking with many of you about this and the lack of a follow up plan we do not have in place sufficiently, this was the question asked . . . We simply offer information to get help and that's not effective to assist with a drug abuse problem. I'm still very much in support of the pre-employment testing and also

reasonable suspicion while on the clock testing, but we have to have a good solid plan for the outcome of random testing, once someone tests positive. By offering no real service plan to them, we only compound the problem, suspension without pay and termination are the two outcomes. Once the member is terminated, the drug problem will ONLY GET WORSE. Because of my position on this, I've taken a pretty good verbal attack from the chairman (my motives are called into question constantly and that's the norm at our board table) through the famous Internet sites as well as threats but that's all right (my skin's pretty tough these days). My only motive is to have a solid plan for the team members to have assistance, guidance and support through the tribe's programs once they are tested positive. Of course they will have to do their part, but through our tribal action plan, the team can work toward that goal because simply being fired is not the answer and IS not going to assist a tribal family in any way.

Members have expressed a government that only penalizes and does not take the real issue in consideration and that's true, in order to help we need our services available and solid. This all becomes clear when you are sitting with members and hearing the problems first hand, maybe that's the disconnect some on the board have. I've also heard many program managers and casino managers express the same opinions about penalizing vs. real supportive methods of assistance. P.S. — none of my family members have recently tested positive. That accusation is untrue; as usual, the norm is to attack my family and close friends. I will update on our progress about the tribal action plan and have hopes we will have a draft in the next few months.

In my reports, I try not to just complain and whine about the ways things are going, I'm truthful, and simply throwing out the problems does not help us in anyway. Once I'm on the opposite side of an opinion things can get pretty ugly with threats and bullying, either at the board table, through emails or the Internet.

I have hundreds of emails and comments that are unacceptable in a governmental atmosphere BUT it won't change my position on items. I've worked with many leaders on this board, many good people as well, and I have to say that this one is truly the finest at bullying tactics and plain ol' high school drama. As always, watch closely.

I'm in the process of advocating and simply begging for repairs on our two powwow grounds, one in Newberry and one in Hessel. With my votes on items, the punishment from some on the board will make this next to impossible, but again, watch closely. The techniques used to play politics are unreal, I have sent dozens of emails and requests to assist in repairing unsafe structures on our grounds. I've been told that a staff member had to actually go out and purchase caution tape to put up because no direction would come forth from admin in a timely manner, these are grounds owned by the tribe for upkeep and responsibility, to use them as a punishment to me and my units is disgusting. Since, and again for a solution, I have requested a proposal come forward for ALL our grounds to be repaired as needed. I will always support the upkeep and priority of all our grounds no matter where they are.

In closing, I had the opportunity to gather with the Naubinway elders this last month to meet and listen to Rattlesnake Annie, who played in a private session just for them. She sang songs that she played in Nashville, wrote and toured with many legendary country singers. The time we had was precious and I would like to send a chi miigwech to Joe Blanchard, one of our tribal elders, who arranged for this. Joe and Annie also went into the homes of elders who cannot get out and sang for them as well. What a priceless experience for them and again, thank you for sharing it with us.

As always, call me with input, concerns and meeting if you would like.

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