

Getting our house in order is our first priority



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In the past month there have been many challenges facing the Tribe. Unfortunately, making changes without proper planning in place can lead to consequences more detrimental to the long-term success of the Tribe and its Enterprises.

BUDGETS

Over the past few months, the tribal board should have been meeting in budget workshops to review the various new fiscal governmental budgets; they have not. It is not responsible to simply hurry up and adopt annual budgets without detailed plans and goals.

Our tribe needs to develop, and adopt, both a short term and long term plans within our governmental structure, as well as our enterprise structure.

Without proper planning there is no reasonable manner with which to gauge our Tribes needs, successes, failures, goals, and objectives.

"If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail!"

CASINOS

Our casinos are the driving force behind the majority of our non-grant tribal operations rev-

enues. Currently, the revenues generated from our casinos are in a state of decline. While these revenues have been drastically declining. To offset this, the current approach has been to cut direct costs drastically. However, eventually there will be nothing left to cut.

While the tribe has selected a temporary management structure, it is time for a more permanent solution that is free of the tribal political factions. In fact, our tribal policies require it!

It becomes quite concerning when individual board members cite concern for an individual as opposed to the overall welfare of the tribe and casino operations. I have never witnessed such a personal connection between certain board members and operations. It would be understandable if they expressed that same individual concern for all employees, however this is not the case. It truly makes one wonder why?

We need to show our appreciation to those front line employees who make it possible for our businesses and tribe to succeed.

If we truly want to show them appreciation, we need to ensure that they succeed. We need to provide opportunities for employment advancement, re-factoring of front line wages, educational and training opportunities. We need them to understand that they actually have a chance at jobs that are posted. We need to focus on changing our current atmosphere and structure and focus upon making Kewadin what it once was. We need to do something, while we still can.

POLICY

I will continue to stress the importance of policy and adherence to our personnel policies and Tribal Code. As I have noted

in the past, these policies are being abused and policies are being selectively ignored; positions are being "hand picked" and ultimately the abuses that many have championed against are still being allowed to continue.

As I have stated, and will continue to reiterate until we as a tribe develop accountability measures to cease these abuses: regardless of who is involved, "friend or proverbial foe," all must be held accountable for actions or inactions.

Those who believe that they are immune from policy or accountability do not serve the tribe, they serve themselves.

REMOVAL

Recently, it has been reported that I voted 'no' on sending forward a removal petition on a member of the board of directors. This statement is incorrect.

I abstained from the vote because it did not adhere to Tribal Code. Under Tribal Code Chapter 16 (16.106(2)): The Registrar shall review the petition and tribal voter registration records under standards and procedures utilized for the verification of signatures on nominating petitions for tribal elections conducted under Tribal Code Ch. 10.

The standards and procedures utilized for the verification of signatures on nominating petitions for tribal elections under Tribal Code: 10.111(5)(a-d) clearly state that a tribal I.D. number shall be required.

There are no tribal identification numbers provided on the removal petition.

I understand that there are those who are not pleased with an abstention. I also understand that the easiest "political" decision to make would've been to

vote 'yes' on this issue; however, breaking one rule to follow another is not an acceptable option.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Economic Development director position for the tribe has still yet to be filled. I am hopeful that the tribe will utilize some more effective recruitment tools to ensure that we find a viable qualified candidate to facilitate this much needed role for our tribe.

Part of the position summary is that:

"The Economic Development Director performs advanced professional work leading and promoting the business and economic development interest for the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians. This will include supervision of all enterprises with the exception of the casino operations. This position will be responsible to develop strategies to enhance, create and build the tribe's economic development and revenue diversification activities, including the complex analysis of data related to planning, financing, tax incentive packaging, marketing and business assistance programming. This position would be responsible to develop long and short term economic and community development goals."

It is my hope that the Economic Development director will be able to move our businesses in a more profitable manner, as well as lead the charge towards new business development and diversification.

I am also hopeful that our corporate charter, approved by the BIA, will one day be utilized. This would afford our tribe with the opportunity to develop and

maintain businesses free from the meddling of politics, thus ensuring that they have a chance to be successful and provide revenues to tribal services.

A tribe may incorporate under Section 17 of the IRA, 25 U.S.C. § 477, by which the Secretary of the Interior issues the tribe a federal charter. Through Section 17 incorporation, the tribe creates a separate legal entity to divide its governmental and business activities.

The Section 17 Corporation has articles of incorporation and bylaws that identify its purpose, much like a state-chartered corporation.

However, a federal charter assures the corporation the same benefits as the tribe, including enjoying the tax exemptions and sovereign immunity.

The Sault Tribe has an approved corporate charter.

The most successful tribes in America run their businesses through their corporate charter. Examples include Seminoles Inc., Ho Chunk Inc., and hopefully one day Sault Tribe will share in this success.

I will continue to push forward with members of the board that wish to be progressive.

I will also continue to work with members of the board to ensure that we become innovative in our approach to economic diversification, membership services, and stepping out of the non-progressive box that we appear to be confined to.

Sincerely,

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