

Taking decisive action to improve management



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There have been a number of serious employment workforce issues we have been grappling with the last few months. I'm not going to spell them out here because, frankly, I think it is unacceptable to subject our workforce to some of the toxic political rhetoric I've seen in unit reports over the last few months at our team member's expense.

The responsibility for this state of affairs rests squarely on the shoulders of the governing board, so I'm not about to point fingers at any of our employees — be they front line workers or upper management — without recognizing the obligation of elected leadership to turn this ship in the right direction.

To be sure, we have some serious operational and managerial deficiencies across our organization — both in governmental services, gaming and the enterprise arms of the tribe. In fact, we are

an organization in crisis. But this didn't happen overnight. When you examine some of our more chronic problems, I think it's fair to conclude our workforce, our management and our institutional structure has suffered serious neglect during the past 10 years.

I've only been on the board since 2010, but I know we've been digging ourselves out of a legal and financial hole since the day I took office. We lost Greentown 10 days before the election, we were immediately served with a \$177 million lawsuit related to Greentown, the 7+2 case went to trial, the police chief was convicted of a crime, a tribal chairman abandoned ship, all the numerous political dramas that have played out since and the constant drum beat of political factionalism. It's a wonder we haven't collapsed entirely.

But we have not collapsed — thanks in part to dedicated employees and some dogged persistence in correcting past mistakes, paying down debt, excellence in regulatory compliance, not borrowing, taking better control over our budgetary process and steering clear of unnecessary and unproductive litigation. When Chairman Payment was elected to office one year ago, a clear set of executive authorities were conferred to him and we adopted his recommendation for new job positions in support of his administrative authorities. And although 2013 has been financially rocky in the wake of federal sequestra-

tion (and 2014 promises to be just as tough), we've managed to stay out of the red, avoid cuts to member services and remain afloat.

I guess what I'm leading up to here is this: The time is right and the time is now to take decisive action to improve the management of our governmental and casino sectors. We've ignored this crisis for too long. It has been a detriment to our core values and mission, our key operations, service quality, revenues and our employee workforce.

It's time to "get it done" and we've begun to do just that over the course of the last few months:

- It was determined by a strong majority (10-2) that it was in the best interest of the tribe to realign the direction and oversight of the tribal Housing to report and take direction from the executive director effective July 17.

Previously, tribal Housing reported to the Housing Authority. Together, they have done an exemplary job in executing a strategic plan that is innovative and focused on self-sustainability. This move will allow the division to stay project focused by providing additional internal management resources to remain policy compliant moving forward.

- It was determined by a strong majority (10-2) that it was in the best interest of the tribe to realign the direction and oversight of the tribal Health Division to report and take direction from the executive director effective July 17.

Previously, tribal Health

reported directly to the chairman. This move will allow for critical oversight and accountability as our tribal Health Division responds to the changing landscape under the Affordable Care Act. There is a strong consensus that oversight and managerial accountability is a better match at the executive director level. However, the executive director still reports to the chairman, so he is still in the chain of command. Recently, our chairman was selected to sit on the National Indian Health Board where he will be an effective leader in shaping Indian health policy nation wide, while the executive director will provide management oversight of day-to-day operations. Together, the strategic planning and quality of care will be better optimized.

- In May, the Internal Audit Committee recommended hiring an outside consultant to provide assistance in improving management and operations at our five Northern Kewadin Casinos. Innovative Gaming Solution has provided us with a comprehensive, in depth assessment of our gaming enterprise over the last few months and just completed a thorough site visit at all five casinos. This is where the rubber hits the road, folks. The scope was focused on Food and Beverage, Marketing and related operations. They were hired to give us an unfiltered assessment. We have a great opportunity for improvement and I expect to see some

financial results immediately. Our workforce has a high learning curve of job knowledge to master, with data driven decision making and filling the accountability gap that exists. You will be hearing more about this effort to implement change management principles into our gaming enterprise.

Something that cannot wait another day is the executive search and recruitment of a Human Resource director. The position has gone unfilled for more than a year. That is unacceptable. Human Resource is mission critical to improving the overall effectiveness of our organizations and our business objectives. We need to outsource the effort to professional recruiters, as our own internal effort has failed. I implore the chairman to make this his number one priority.

In conclusion, I just want to say that I appreciate all the phone calls and emails. I've pretty much devoted the last two months to listening to your concerns. It's a pleasure serving you in any way I can. Please don't be shy about reaching out. Thanks to our tribal staff and community members who are always there to lend a helping hand. We are so blessed to have such a strong community. Enjoy the rest of powwow season!

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