

Too much at stake to rubber stamp tribe's budget



**LANA CAUSLEY,
DIRECTOR, UNIT II**

I have put off writing this report until the end as I didn't really know how to balance out my frustrations. I want to just swing and continue until all the truth comes out and leaders with no vision quite using our team members and members to politic their agendas; but, I can't. I know that members do want levelheaded, steady and stable leadership. We have so many items and issues weighing on our tribe right now, so I am going to keep it professional and sound when it comes to my decisions and reports.

In the last week, we have had team member raises, bonuses and subsidy payments for some fishermen being discussed. I will start with the raises and bonuses.

As stated, the board of directors has been in the process of reviewing the annual budgets for 2016 for some time; we did not have ample opportunity to discuss and have not had presentations from all department managers to date. Inside the proposed budget for 2016, all departments included a three percent increase for all employees. I support this and stated that many different times (Meanwhile, it's being used as a tool to force the budgets to pass with everything else included). As I've explained and requested forever now is a budget process where we eval-

uate and assess the funding for programs. We do not prioritize or plan for services in a way that tells us if each program is accommodating needs of the members. For instance, we have certain programs that have much of the funding in administration cost while just a low amount goes into the line item for services. I have personally spoken to the chair about us doing our annual budgets a different way and have brought it up many, many times for action; none have been taken. We have proposed amounts in the budgets for outside consultants, donations to outside entities, increases or decreases in certain departments that I simply do not support along with many items that needed increased funding with no action or plan. I advocate for many items that do not even seem to fall on ears that hear me.

These are the frustrating things I speak about. I simply cannot rubber stamp a budget when so much is at stake. In 2008, we absolutely had to restructure and reduce as we were going down this same path and I remember how painful that was. I do not want that to happen again. In last year's budget we earmarked an amount for raises and didn't move forward due to unsteady circumstances within our budgets, now the amounts are being promised as a bonus for team members. Once again, I'm in support of this and will be when we finally have true numbers, a plan and a vote in front of us for a decision. This has not been afforded yet (the bonus is for only those that are full time positions and has raised questions as well). All this comes with so much politics involved that it's a shame.

If we would have had a solid plan come forward or even presented in a professional manner, it would have been smooth and so many team members would

not have been hurt and upset along the way (the board read about the plan for a bonus on Facebook for the first time, then the politics started) like many times before. Team members are led to believe we don't appreciate them or value their hard work and that just is not true. When those in high positions don't know how to lead, they cause turmoil and pit people against one another and there simply is no worse thing that can happen to people of a tribe. (I'm trying to hold it to a minimum). I've apologized many times for these kinds of actions within leadership and I will once again. I'm sorry to the team members who have to go through this kind of nonsense. You deserve a raise, a bonus and a solid, stable presentation should have been made for an up or down vote in a professional manner by administration. The rest is smoke and mirrors.

We have had some very difficult times with our commercial fishing areas. The Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority (CORA) closed down all fisherman from the five tribes to any sort of fishing efforts in Lake Michigan MM-123. We have many issues as to the way we calculate numbers, the stocking of trout, enforcement of our rules as well as our structures in place for fishing. It's no secret we have hard items to address and our fisherman do not all agree with each other as all businesses and ways of fishing are unique to each family.

Due to the closure of Lake Michigan for the remainder of the season, we had a draft proposal presented on a payment to be made to the fisherman who were affected by the closure. After a closed session (I did not agree with nor did I participate, until it was demanded that I attend) it was proposed to set the payment as follows: Over 10 days on water in 2015 season

receive full equal payments — under 10 days on water receive \$500; pay captains (unless they have a co-captain who is the one actively conducting the on the water operations) and pay helpers; pay parents via minors and the last was pay only the operations that have documented effort on Lake Michigan MM-123 areas. This was the proposal that the board came up with to distribute a \$200,000 earmarked amount. Once again, it's being politicized that I didn't support a subsidy to the fisherman. I didn't support the structure of this as many items won't be addressed, haven't been discussed and all our fisherman have been affected due to our rules, inactivity of dealing with the state and feds on stocking issues and calculation of numbers, etc.

At this point, we are in the process of taking suggestions and coming up with a payment structure that could assist all involved. When we received a listing of payment amounts, some fishermen that should have been included were not even on the list! Rubber-stamping to get things over with is not the answer for the problems we have. I'm frustrated over many things, but to use the needs of people in times of struggle is a true shame in the world of politics. We have seen this before and at this point I have been able to get a date committed (Dec. 15, 3:30 during the board's workshop and all fisherman should receive a notice via U.S. mail) to begin the discussions with all the fisherman on the structure of cards, stocking of lake trout, how we calculate our numbers for starters. (These items have been brought to me from many fishermen.) In the end and at this point, I do think we will come to a resolution on the payment structure. I just hope it will truly touch the people it should be

intended to help. I'm not confident it will the way it was originally proposed. I'm at the table to discuss and will continue to encourage all fisherman to voice what the resolves are for our industry. It's been a trying month and I have to say that anyone that knows me, knows I've lost sleep over the roughshod that gets played on our team members and fisherman.

Also this month, the board of directors voted to post for a permanent CEO for our casinos. As you all know, we were going down a path with expertise from a temporary CEO, meeting weekly and paying that person handsomely for his knowledge and expertise, our bottom lines improved with the new path, policies and plans of action were being taken and managers given tools for better business decisions as well as accountability on the managers part, but now it seems we will take another different approach. I did not support changing our path at this time and posting while we had made a commitment to this form and plan, but a majority deems it's necessary that we advertise and post for someone else or a different plan? I'm only truly hoping it's not an old buddy from the past or someone who is being promised this very important position within our businesses. I'm here and will continue to advocate for experience, knowledge and expertise in the gaming industry. The board does NOT have those qualifications.

In closing, I'm committed to things changing and evolving for the betterment of our people. At this time, I would like to wish everyone a very blessed Christmas and new year and please contact me if you would like to talk or meet.

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