

Little River Band of Ottawa Indians/Election Board Open Meeting Minutes

June 16, 2022

I. Call to order

Val McDonnell called the meeting to order at 5:04.

Yes-Mike Ceplina Yes-Laura Echelbarger Yes-Val McDonnell

Yes-Kathy Gibson Yes-Karen Love

II. Attendee's: Sandy Mezeske, Chelsea Densmore, Larry Romanelli, Antonio Romanelli, Gary DiPiazza

III. Open Issues: No emailed questions from members prior to meeting

IV. Open Meeting The Chair opened the meeting and stated that no one had sent questions to the Election Board in advance of the meeting and asked if anyone had any questions. Chelsea Densmore asked if any ballots had been received in the week since the Election date. The Chair stated that she hadn't checked the post office since the day of Election but it was checked on Tuesday. Kathy Gibson stated that she thought there were a total of 32 that arrived to the post office and most were post marked for the 8th and 9th. 3 of the 32 were post marked prior to the 8th but they didn't arrive prior to the noon cut off. Chelsea Densmore asked if having 30 post marked after the cut off was normal and Val McDonnell told her that yes, that number can be fairly high and 30 is about normal. Chelsea Densmore also asked if the Election Board had heard anything back from the Council regarding the prior day's work session to gain permission to use a new vendor. Val McDonnell stated that the 2nd work session was to be scheduled for the following week. Sandy Mezeske asked if there were challenges sent in and Val McDonnell stated that yes, we did receive challenges and the election cannot be certified until the challenges are complete. Chelsea Densmore asked if the board could state how many challenges were sent in? Kathy Gibson responded that there were 6 and 1 blank one was sent in. Sandy Mezeske asked if the board would have an answer next week from the council's attorney regarding using a new election company and Val McDonnell stated that yes, they were expected to have an answer from their attorney and ours as well. Chelsea Densmore asked about a posting from the Facebook page regarding the mention of the board not knowing about the vendor changes regarding the envelopes and ultimate mailing date. Is the board considering changing the contract to reflect these issues so the next contractor cannot make random changes without notification? Kathy Gibson stated that currently we are held to using this vendor until the next election so we can't make any changes to the contract but if we can use someone else we will definitely be taking those steps to insure this doesn't happen

again. Val McDonnell stated that she would like to see an actual image of the envelope because when it was sent by the vendor it didn't show the cut line on it. Chelsea Densmore stated that it might be worth adding into the contract itself that the vendor must seek approval for all items as proofs before they are sent to the membership. Val McDonnell stated that she did like the envelopes and they worked very well. Karen Love stated that the people who received those new envelopes was a new thing to them and they didn't realize why they were receiving them with the cut line and open ended. If we could have explained it better they would have understood but it was too late once they were being received. At that point it was a new thing for them and for us and we couldn't rectify it when they were already being received. Further, she stated, there was nothing that we could do and we know people were upset but maybe we should have put out there that these envelopes were the most efficient envelopes we could have asked for. Sandy Mezeske stated that she agreed and she stated so to her cousins in the outlying that the envelopes were still secretive. Chelsea stated that she was one of the people who actually got the envelope and she definitely disagreed that it was secret and felt that by stating it was secret with an end cut out and open was clearly not a secretive envelope. Further, she stated that if the EB had agreed to use these as secretive with the vendor that would have been a different discussion but that wasn't the case because the EB was unaware of these envelopes being used when they started showing up and people started mentioning them. That's what was stated in the work session and people might not have voted based on the envelopes because they didn't know that the envelopes were coming this way. Kathy Gibson stated that all special elections are held within the 3 months so we were under the gun to keep to the time frame of the 3 months. We were open and not very many people called to state they did not have their ballots. It is clearly stated in our regulations that members need to contact the Election Board to get a new ballot. We had one member call to say they didn't get it and then called to say they got it the next day. As far as the secrecy ballot goes, if you watch the steps that were taken to open them, once the envelope is removed they are put in a pile and you can't see inside the envelope whether it is sealed or not sealed. Val McDonnell said that the Election Board has a list of members who voted but not how they voted and a couple of those people call to say they didn't get a ballot but yet when we looked at the list they did vote and their ballots did show up to be counted. Sandy Mezeske asked if the EB checks the voice mail every day when there is an election and Val McDonnell responded that she checks it Tuesdays and Thursdays but also does check it from home but she didn't hear anything from home. There was a total of 9 calls that came in that stated they didn't get a ballot but that was before they started being received and we called them back to state they are in the mail. Kathy Gibson said people were very confused as to who was able to vote and some people were thinking they should have had a ballot but they lived in the 9 county area. Karen Love said that a lot of people were complaining about not getting ballots on Facebook and she went

through and wrote names down but not one of those people didn't call and some lived in the 9 county area. Sandy Mezeske asked about the vendor being in Maryland but the ballots sent from California? Val McDonnell said yes, that did happen. Karen Love reminded everyone that there are very few companies who do this work and also that our enrollment department software often isn't compatible with their system so we can't use them. Val McDonnell said that no one complained during the election for the associate judge and that had the same time frame of 3 months. Sandy Mezeske said that AES was a very good company to use, maybe there was some problems but the company was not crooked but people are going to complain. She thinks we should go back to AES but there are very limited number of people. Chelsea Densmore said she had mentioned in her email regarding the time line but 3 months is such a short period of time and the time when the ballots were shipped and then had to be back in was such a short time frame that we should think about shortening some dates so that it gives the membership more time to get their ballots back. Val McDonnell said that the background check time takes a week to 10 days to come back. Laura Echelbarger said she thinks that there are many places to change the time frame and give more time for ballots to come back. Karen Love said by her count the membership had about 15 days to get the ballots back, even if they got it and it was a week before the election, there were only 5 candidates on it, check the box and send it back in. But when we checked and the percentage of voters was only about 23% voting and that is a pretty normal time. Chelsea Densmore stated that the EB regulations specifically state that members only have 15 business days to request a new one and they were sent 17 business days which limits the time to request a new ballot, that's not right. Val McDonnell stated that maybe we need to ship them out 30 days before. Chelsea Densmore agreed that its impossible to give 15 days before the election to get a new ballot when they are mailed 17 days before. It seems to her that there is a lot of time in the beginning of the 3 month section to give the candidates time to get packets back, etc...but maybe that time should be shortened to give the membership more time. Kathy Gibson stated that we have talked about that time frame and changing it. Some of that time frame is also taken up by what the vendor needs also. The 90 day time frame would be a constitutional change. Laura Echelbarger said that the EB definitely needs to look at time frame but looking at the announcement the candidates had to have their packets back on April 7th and we didn't certify until May 5th and that is time we can shorten there. Also, we give the candidates a whole week to withdraw and maybe it shouldn't be possibly a whole week to withdraw and there are places to shorten that time down for the membership. Chelsea Densmore stated that using this as ways to improve and making sure that we learn from the issues that crop up so things can be improved. Change the regulations to make improvements. She also asked with all of the elections are done do you have any estimation as to when the new regulations might be posted for the 30 day public comment? Val McDonnell and Karen Love both stated that we

have to be done with them soon so we can put them out before we announce the next election at the end of August or beginning of September. We have to get them done and everything is a learning process and we will incorporate changes to make for better elections. Karen Love also stated that the Election Board seat is a hard thing because it is a thankless job and we always get people who are complaining or stating that we are running a corrupt election but it's not that at all. We have 5 people that work hard trying to keep it all together and put out a good election. Sandy Mezeske said Amen to that, that she appreciates the hard work. She also asked on the background checks if we check just Michigan or other states and Val McDonnell said we do all states. Sandy Mezeske asked if a discrepancy has ever been found. Val McDonnell stated that there hasn't been anything found and Karen Love clarified that we can only look at the last 10 years. Sandy Mezeske asked if something was found if the board would take the step and it was stated yes. Val McDonnell asked if anyone had any other questions and Chelsea Densmore stated that she wrote her first challenge recently and was disappointed at the response. She stated that she wished the board would take opportunities to humanize themselves. When the board was stating that the vendor had mailed out the ballots late and used envelopes not approved by the board that the board should have taken that time to state a response that we will use this to do better. Also, possibly make a video to help members to vote and make it easier for them. During the challenge process only a legal document was used in response and it felt disconnected from the board. There are many opportunities to show that the board consists of tribal members and to connect with the membership instead of set themselves apart from them. Karen Love said that she suggested recently some ways to reconnect with the tribal members, to give extra information and show them how to contact via phone and email. She also said that she used to post a lot of the updates on the major facebook pages but in most cases the responses are not positive and people lash out. Val McDonnell said that most of the Election Board didn't know how the ballots were going out until Laura Echelbarger sent a picture because she was the only outlying member. At that point they reacted and decided how to go forward. Chelsea Densmore said that most often people do have a negative take on it but she feels that more information is always good regardless if there are people who react negatively because those people react in the same way to everything. She stated that she didn't truly understand the counting process so didn't know how the new secrecy envelope could work and wasn't confident in it and when Laura Echelbarger walked her through it she understood it better. Maybe the board could in the future make videos based on these issue's so the membership as a whole could understand the process better? She stated that Antonio Romanelli made the video and even though she didn't vote for him she felt that the video was a really great way to humanize himself and to reach out to voters. The more information given out would be so helpful not just regarding the elections but also how the board works together and does things. Sandy Mezeske agreed with

Chelsea Densmore regarding the video of Antonio Romanelli's but thinks the information should be viewed only but not have comments. Laura Echelbarger stated that she agrees also about posting as informational only. The Election Board started a Facebook page to post as much information as we could to try to keep all members as aware of the happenings as possible but it turned into a place that the Election Board was really torn up on those pages. Laura Echelbarger also stated that she left the EB page as well as all of the other pages for mental health reasons. Changing the EB page to informational only with no posts or comments might be the better way to go and we will discuss in a meeting and vote on it.

V. Adjournment

Val McDonnell adjourned at 6:21