

Little River Band of Ottawa Indians Press Release



For Immediate Release

Ogema Larry B. Romanelli Retains Office Following Historic Tribal Council Vote!

Manistee, MI (December 16, 2024) – On December 16, 2024, the Tribal Council of the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians (LRBOI) held a historic and closely watched proceeding to vote on the removal of Ogema Larry B. Romanelli. The motion to remove Ogema Romanelli, stemming from allegations of misconduct and failure to fulfill constitutional duties, fell short of the constitutionally required seven votes. With six votes in favor and three against, Ogema Romanelli remains in office.

The removal process was initiated on December 4, 2024, after the Tribal Council brought forward allegations against Ogema Romanelli, including gross misconduct, malfeasance, failure to provide required financial reports, and violations of the Ogema's Oath of Office. A public hearing on these allegations took place on December 16, 2024, at the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians Government Center Lodge and via Zoom. During the hearing, the Tribal Council presented its case, supported by witness testimony.

The removal process was initiated on December 4, 2024, when the Tribal Council formally charged Ogema Romanelli with the following allegations:

Gross Misconduct and Malfeasance in Office

The Ogema was accused of failing to submit the 2023 LRBOI Single Audit to the United States Department of the Interior as required under the Tribal Constitution. This delay placed the Tribe at risk of sanctions and raised concerns about financial management and compliance.

Failure to Abide by the Oath of Office and Perform Responsibilities

The Ogema's Oath of Office commits the elected official to uphold and protect the Tribe's Constitution, abide by its laws, respect the Tribal Council, and prioritize the welfare of the Tribe. The Tribal Council alleged that Ogema Romanelli failed to meet these obligations.

Failure to Provide Monthly Financial Reports to the Tribal Council

The Ogema did not provide financial reports to the Tribal Council after May 2024, impeding

the Council's ability to monitor and manage the Tribe's financial condition effectively. This failure included not preparing and presenting the annual Tribal Budget in a timely manner.

These charges were presented in a public hearing held on December 16, 2024, at the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians Government Center Lodge and via Zoom. Witnesses provided testimony detailing the implications of the alleged failures, including the potential for financial sanctions and the erosion of trust in the Tribe's administrative processes.

The vote required a minimum of seven affirmative votes to remove Ogema Romanelli from office. The final vote tally was as follows:

In Favor of Removal:

- Councilor Wittenberg
- Councilor Metzger
- Councilor Wolfe
- Councilor Burmeister
- Councilor Johnson
- Council Crampton

Against Removal:

- Councilor Weaver
- Councilor DiPiazza
- Councilor Silvis

The Tribal Constitution requires a minimum of seven affirmative votes to remove an Ogema from office. As the resolution to remove Ogema Romanelli did not meet this threshold, he retains his position.

This vote marks a significant moment in LRBOI governance. Although concerns raised during the proceedings highlighted key issues within the Tribe's administration, the constitutional process ultimately upheld the Ogema's continuation in office. Moving forward, Ogema Romanelli is tasked with addressing the matters brought to light during this process and reaffirming his commitment to the Tribe's welfare.