

# CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

## Joint Meeting of Siletz and Lincoln City Councils

On Aug. 26, the Tribal Council and the Lincoln City Council held a joint meeting, the first such meeting that our two councils have ever had. What happened before the primary election will help explain how that joint meeting came about.

Mayor Lori Hollingsworth had made what our Tribal Council and others took to be misleading statements about the tribe's fee-to-trust efforts. Specifically, in her State of the City report to the Chamber of Commerce on Feb. 10, the mayor said, among other things, that "The tribe's fee to-trust eroded the tax base. That's a fact, not a political statement."

Although the mayor claimed her statements were taken out of context, they were – whether intentional or not – misleading. She offered no credible explanation for her comments, nor did she ever give any credit to the enormous positive contributions the tribe has made to the economy of Lincoln City.

The mayor failed to garner sufficient votes in the primary and faces a November run-off. It was not long after the primary that she requested a meeting with the Tribal Council.

We agreed, but at the meeting the mayor made no mention of her public statement about the tribe's fee-to-trust. Instead, she suggested a joint meeting of the two councils to discuss matters of mutual interest, specifically naming tourism and tsunami preparedness as agenda items.

Although we felt that the mayor's offer to meet with us to be disingenuous, the Tribal Council took her suggestion at face value and agreed to the joint meeting.

We were disappointed that the mayor did not offer to clarify or apologize for having made her negative and misleading public comments, but felt that a joint meeting could be of benefit to both councils. We set our agenda items for that first meeting.

The meeting was held Aug. 26 at Chinook Winds. When the discussion came to the city's general fund and taxes, I felt it important to broach the subject and appropriate to discuss the contributions that the tribe and casino have made to the city, county, and state of Oregon.

I said the Tribal Council was concerned about the mayor's statement to the media in which she blamed the tribe for not paying its share in pursuing its fee-to-trust objectives and specifically having a negative impact on the city's General Fund. I pointed out that we were paying the city, annually, the negotiated \$175,000.

Further, I stated that we contribute to the city in positive ways, perhaps not directly to the general fund, but significantly nonetheless.

The tribe and casino management make purchases locally to benefit Lincoln City and county businesses. In fact, I pointed out that about \$32 million



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generated by our casino benefits Lincoln County and Lincoln City annually.

Beyond that, 85 percent of all our charitable funds go to Lincoln County and of those funds, 59 percent is education-related. (Information distributed to City Council members is reprinted on page 4.)

In her State of the City address before the chamber, the mayor also stated that unlike some surrounding cities, "Lincoln City is not in crisis." She specifically cited increases in business occupation taxes, new annexations, increases in transient room taxes, and a carry-over of \$2.3 million this coming year.

Although the mayor said, "We are in a strong position and I feel very proud about that," she failed to acknowledge that many of the accomplishments she cited in her report to the chamber can be attributed to the tribe's enormous economic impacts.

As a tribe whose treaty reservation – hundreds of thousands of acres – was demolished by unwarranted federal action, instigated by the non-Indians' huge hunger for Indian land, the tribe's right to restore a land base under the U.S. government's fee-to-trust program is of vital importance to our tribe's present and future social and economic welfare.

The record shows that ever since the tribe was "restored" in 1977, our pursuit of fee-to-trust objectives has been reasonable and modest, always with respect for and fairness to local governments.

If the mayor had had any concerns about the tribe's fee-to-trust actions, I said we could have discussed them before they became public. Although I expected a response from the mayor to my comments, none was forthcoming – no offer of an apology for or an explanation of her public statements about the tribe's fee-to-trust.

While the Tribal Council always pursues our fee-to-trust objectives with the best interest of the tribe as a paramount consideration, we are at the same time mindful of the need to mitigate as much as possible whatever impacts there may be on the environment, municipal services, and taxes. We are proud of

the fact that our tribe has been successful in accomplishing these objectives.

I appreciate the fact that the two councils had an opportunity to meet and that another joint meeting will be held. The Siletz Tribal Council always has endeavored to deal with the city in a spirit of honesty, cooperation, and respect. I am hopeful the mayor and City Council will reciprocate in that same spirit.

During the meeting on the fee-to-trust issue, we took the opportunity to briefly clarify for the City Council the current fee-to-trust process as administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and identified the trust status of the parcels that the tribe currently owns in Lincoln City.

## City Budget

The joint meeting offered an opportunity for city officials to explain the city's budget. Of the 30 different funds with separate accounts, the city's General Fund is available for use at the City Council's discretion.

It was reported that the city's plan was to build a surplus over the past two to four years, but it was forced to spend the surplus for current needs. The City Council holds an annual workshop to discuss what it can do to increase revenues.

By 2010, we were told, the city must have a plan to decrease expenses and increase revenues. The provisions under which various city funds can be used were explained, i.e., the General Fund, Planning funds, Open Space funds, etc.

## Tsunami – Natural Disaster Preparedness

Tsunami preparedness, which was on the agenda, is a topic of major importance to us all. Unfortunately, many people pay little or no attention to natural disaster preparedness until it's too late.

The city, however, has done a very good job of getting informational materials out to the public. The alarm system was faulty but a secondary system is being reviewed and budgeted by the city at \$35,000.

## Tourism

It was agreed that both the city and the tribe have a vested economic interest in developing tourism. One of the problems is that Lincoln City tourism is seasonal.

Issues inhibiting tourism and ideas to promote more tourism were discussed, including the need for more space for indoor activities, opening of shops in the evenings, attracting more ethnic events, etc.

It was reported that special interest centers enhance tourism, such as the glass foundry that opened last year and attracted 75,000 people wanting to make their own glass floats. Also expected to open soon are a culinary center at city hall and a training center for hospitality services.

Interest in American Indian museums also was noted as needing to be

developed. It isn't a moneymaker, but cultural museums do attract tourists.

One suggestion was to help improve the artifact collections of the North Lincoln County Historical Museum. There is interest in promoting tribal culture as part of the Lincoln City Cultural Center at DeLake School, which was purchased by the city.

## Water Rights

An important agenda item was discussion of water and water rights. The sources of water, the complexities involved in developing adequate water supplies, and its use were discussed.

It was reported that 100 percent of the city's water comes from Schooner Creek. There isn't sufficient water for future use, while Kernville/Lincoln Beach/Gleneden Beach have excess water.

Various issues were discussed, including developing a secondary source of water during winter, rebuilding the holding facility damaged in 1999, the state issuance of a permit to transfer water from Kernville to Lincoln City, and the need for developing water availability for the next 10 years.

When the issue of the need for more information regarding Schooner Creek was raised, it was agreed that the tribe needed to be included in future discussions.

## Final Comment on the Joint Meeting

Although the mayor's failure to comment on her public statements critical of the tribe's fee-to-trust efforts was troubling, this first joint meeting of the councils was cordial and informative. It set the stage for the next joint meeting, scheduled for March 2007. Specific items were suggested for the agenda.

## Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians

The tribe hosted the annual ATNI conference at Chinook Winds. Thirty-one tribes were present, which was the second-largest annual meeting ever held.

We had the first half-day to present information about our tribe. Charles Wilkinson was there to discuss our tribal research and the book he is writing about our history. Our staff made presentations on some of our innovative programs and our general manager reported on the tribe's economic development activities.

Many important issues came forward that affect all tribes. Committees met and formulated resolutions that were discussed and passed by the General Assembly.

A highlight of the meeting was the salmon dinner held for all attendees at the Siletz Tribal Community Center on the second night. After dinner, attendees were entertained at the Dance House by some of our Feather Dancers. We received wonderful comments about the dinner and dance.

A big thank you goes out to all our staff who assisted in making the conference a success.