

Winnebago Tribal Council Votes to Assume Operation of the Winnebago Hospital

Winnebago, NE, November 13, 2017: On November 9, 2017, the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska Tribal Council voted to initiate the Self-Governance process under the Indian Self-determination and Education Assistance Act. The Tribe will soon request that the Indian Health Service (IHS) enter into negotiations so that the Tribe can operate the Winnebago Hospital.

Winnebago Tribal Chairman Frank White explained that “The Winnebago Tribe has been working toward this day for more than two years. We believe the Tribe can improve the quality and access to care at the Hospital, and stabilize the management of the health system. The Tribe has been highly concerned about the loss of CMS certification since July 2015 and the inability of IHS to restore certification and improve patient care.”

In order to prepare for the transition from IHS operations to Tribal management, the Tribe has established a Self-Governance Steering Committee with several subcommittees. The purpose of the Steering Committee is to help the Tribal Council make decisions, build internal tribal capacity for management, and prepare for the negotiations process.

“Committee members have been working since June to plan and develop materials that support the assumption of the Hospital. It is a critical endeavor for Winnebago to raise the level of health care available to all tribal citizens in our area,” said Councilwoman Victoria Kitcheyan.

The Winnebago Tribal Council has met with the Omaha Tribal Council regarding this planned transition. Both Tribes share concerns about the failure of the Indian Health Service to achieve recertification of the Hospital and the importance of the hospital being restored to appropriate standards. Winnebago Tribal Chairman White commented, “The Winnebago Tribe is committed to working with the Omaha Tribe and IHS to assure an orderly transition of the hospital.”

The Winnebago Tribe intends to conclude negotiations and assume the operation of the Winnebago Hospital by July 1, 2018. This deadline was set to allow the Tribe adequate time to negotiate agreements and properly transition administration of the health care programs and services.

The Tribal Council envisions a transition for current Hospital employees to agreements that will allow the Winnebago Tribe to retain those working in the facility. Chairman White explained, “We know current employees have a lot of questions. Just as the Tribal Resolution #16-05 states, it is of utmost importance to the Tribe to retain all qualified and eligible staff to maintain operations at the facility. It is our intention, whenever possible, to offer each employee an Intergovernmental Personnel Act Agreement (IPA), a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) or direct tribal hire so that the employee can continue in his or her position as a federal employee or tribal employee of the facility.” Current IHS employees with questions about how tribal assumption of the hospital may affect them should reach out to the IHS Area Human Resources or other appropriate federal personnel.

As the Tribe moves forward, additional announcements and information will be made in the Winnebago Indian News and on the Tribe’s official Facebook page and website. Questions may also be directed to Councilmember Victoria Kitcheyan at (402) 922-3970 regarding this initiative.

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There will be a scheduled press conference on Tuesday, November 14, 2017 at 1:00 pm. at the Ho-Chunk Center, BIA Road 3, Winnebago, NE 68071.

Winnebago Tribal Chairman, Frank White and other tribal officials will make remarks and address any media questions regarding the Winnebago Hospital at this time.

Press Conference Contact:

Garan Coons, Winnebago Tribe Communications Officer

Telephone: (402) 922-2721

Email: [garan.coons@winnebagoTribe.com](mailto:garan.coons@winnebagoTribe.com)