

Press release draft

The Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (KBIC) Tribal Council is dedicated to serving the Community and being fully transparent as to how and why decisions are made. I would like to provide the facts related to our decision not to accept the proposed amendment to the constitution, brought forth by the Constitutional Convention Committee, regarding term limits.

Council discussed the idea of term limits last November. The one parameter that was agreed upon, **by all Councilmembers**, was that the term limits would not be retroactive. The idea was to move forward from the date of adoption into law. On November 14, 2019, the KBIC Tribal Council approved the ballot question: “Do you support term limits for all tribal council members”?

The ballot measure passed, at the December 14, 2019 General Election, with 367 in favor and 146 opposed. The KBIC then tasked the Constitutional Convention Committee (CCC) to develop the framework. Again, this task was to be performed with the understanding that any amendment to the Constitution would not be retroactive.

On February 18, 2020, the first CCC meeting was held with 28 participants. The next meeting was held on March 10, 2020 with 26 people in attendance. These meetings were well advertised to the membership. On March 20th, the Tribe declared a Tribal State of Emergency due to the Co-Vid 19 pandemic. The next meeting that was held was on August 25, via Zoom. At this meeting, there were 10 people in attendance and not all delegates were notified. There were 3 more CCC Zoom meetings held with only 7 community members in attendance. At this time, additional community members were permitted to attend these meetings while other(s) were denied. “Conflict of Interest” was the reason given to deny one tribal member’s attendance. This was puzzling when you consider the fact that there were council members serving as delegates on the CCC.

With the 2020 tribal election process underway, the KBIC Tribal Council received a copy of the CCC’s resolution and proposed amendment to Article IV Section 7 “has not been elected to four or more three-year terms on the Tribal Council”. Upon review of the amendment and testimony from delegates who attended the CCC’s meetings, it became apparent that the amendment being presented to

Council was an attempt to purge one third of the Council by going retroactive to include all terms served by a Council member.

It was the impression of the Council that the term limits being added to our Constitution would take effect once enacted and would not be used as a political weapon to remove public servants with esteemed tenures. The majority of the KBIC Tribal Council believes that the will of the people is essential to any democracy. The notion that “this is what the community wants” is simply not true. Many community members have expressed their concerns regarding the retroactive portion of the proposed amendment. It was the Council’s intent to present the membership with options, not an ultimatum.

This was not the “end all” of the process, the amendment needs to be revised to fit the intent. The KBIC Tribal Council will continue its responsibilities of leading and governing in a fair and effective manner. We will also continue to resolve conflict through the art of compromise, while respecting the opinions of others.