



Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Indians
Legislative Branch of Tribal Government

Weekly Review: January 8-12, 2024

State of the Band Address & Band Assembly Meeting

January 9, 2024

The Speaker of the Assembly convened a meeting of the Band Assembly prior to the State of the Band Address held at Grand Casino Mille Lacs. The meeting was recessed and reconvened at the Band Assembly Chambers where the District Representatives approved the agenda.

The District Representatives approved Band Assembly Record: January 3, 2024.

The District Representatives approved Band Assembly Bill 21-01-03-24 (A Bill enacting a Cannabis Code as a new chapter within Title 15 – Independent Agencies. This bill will create a Department of Cannabis Regulation, an independent entity, which will be administered by a five-person board. The Department will oversee issuance of cannabis licenses for cultivation, manufacturing, wholesale, retail, and testing within the Band’s sovereign territory. The board will hear license appeals and also approve contracts and create regulations consistent with the Code. The Department will have an executive director and staff to carry out the necessary duties to effectuate the purpose of this Code. The Code also allows for home cultivation of up to eight cannabis plants. This bill also amends Title 23 to update outdated citations to Minnesota law and update possession of cannabis within a vehicle to mirror Minnesota law).

In the creation and drafting of this bill, the legislative branch held several workshops and two public comment periods. The first public comment period, the draft bill was posted for 22 days, and the bill was discussed in every community. The legislative branch received over 50 comments with a majority of comments being positive. The second public comment period, the draft bill was posted for 13 days. The legislative branch received two comments. This bill is intended to encourage not only business opportunities for Mille Lacs Corporate Ventures but also Band members, to encourage responsible use of cannabis within the communities, to support drug abuse prevention efforts through education, prevention, and treatment for the community, to provide smoke-free and clean air places for the community, and to continue providing a drug-free workplace for government-owned and government-operated buildings.

The District Representatives approved Band Assembly Bill 21-01-04-24 (A Bill Authorizing a Supplemental Appropriation for the purpose of authorizing expenditures and budget revision(s)/transfer(s) for the Executive Branch, for the Fiscal Years ending September 30, 2024).

The District Representatives approved Resolution 21-01-01-24 (A Resolution Authorizing the Mille Lacs Corporate Ventures to Expend Funds from FY2024 Capital Budget for Grand Casino Hinckley, Mille Lacs, and Joint Casino Projects).

The District Representatives approved contract with TRUTOUCH Cleaning Services, LLC. to provide janitorial services for the Health & Human Services facility.

The District Representatives approved contract addendum for Service Master to cover janitorial services expenses remainder of calendar year as well as extend the contract end date from September 30, 2023 to December 31, 2023.

The District Representatives approved contract with Portages Health to provide continued mental health psychiatric services.

In the “Messages from the Representatives” portion of the agenda, District I Representative Virgil Wind opened with gratitude for the numbers and information on programs and services presented during State of the Band. He acknowledged Speaker Boyd’s speech and referenced that his speeches are heart touching and ties it to people from the past. He continued on to thank Chief Justice Rhonda Sam, Chief Executive Melanie Benjamin, and all the commissioners for taking time and to effort to share. Representative Wind shared Cannabis is a collaboration which was passed today and hopefully it becomes law, encouraged Band members to keep an eye out. Representative Wind closed his comments with his personal experience with mental health and stated the need for mental health to alleviate the stigma and importance of healing after dealing with trauma after trauma and his support of the mental health initiative. He shared a thank you to Commissioner Anderson and the public schools who support the kids.

District II Representative Wendy Merrill opened with community meetings will be Tuesday, January 17, 2024, at Minisinaakwang and Wednesday, January 18, 2024, at Chiminising we don’t have a speaker at this time. She will speak with the aides and find out who the speaker is. Representative Merrill shared that she appreciates the sharing and feedback of the State of the Band and dedication to youth was important and her youngest in attendance with her and others appreciate hearing that, and she would like them to learn more about our tribal government. Representative Merrill closed her comments with miigwech to everyone again that has worked on the Cannabis bill, including Zach Atherton-Ely, Joe Nayquonabe Jr., Arik Robertson, Mike Beattie, Caleb Dogeagle, Hanna Valento, and Beth Baldwin from Ziontz Chestnut.

District III Representative Harry Davis opened and closed with our community meeting is Thursday, January 18, 2024, and congratulations to Rick Pardun for his appointment as Commissioner of Community Development.

Joint Session of the Band Assembly Meeting **January 9, 2024**

The Speaker of the Joint Session of the Band Assembly convened a meeting of the Joint Session of the Band Assembly. The Joint Session of the Band Assembly amended and approved the agenda.

The Joint Session of the Assembly approved Joint Band Assembly Record: October 17, 2023.

The Joint Session of the Assembly approved Joint Session of the Band Assembly Resolution 21-01-01-24 (A Resolution Approving the Enrollments into the Non-Removable Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe for Those who meet the 1/4 Degree Requirement of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe).

The Joint Session of the Assembly approved Joint Session of the Band Assembly Resolution 21-01-02-24 (A Resolution Denying the Enrollments into the Non-Removable Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe for Those who do not meet the 1/4 Degree Requirement of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe).

The Joint Session of the Assembly approved Joint Session of the Band Assembly Resolution 21-01-03-24 (A Resolution Denying the Enrollments into the Non-Removable Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe for Applicants Who Were Not Born to an Enrolled Mille Lacs Band Member).

Tribal Executive Sub-Committee Meetings **January 10, 2024**

The elected officials and staff attended the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe Tribal Executive Committee sub-committee meetings.

Tribal Executive Committee Meeting **January 11, 2024**

The elected officials and staff attended the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe Tribal Executive Committee regular meeting.

The next Band Assembly meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 17, 2024 at 10:00 a.m.

Valerie Harrington-Wind
Chief Communications Officer