

Press Release

Brown County Taxpayers Association

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For Immediate Release

Information: Tom Sladek (920-499-7701)

Taxpayers Association recommends Common Council discard proposed intergovernmental agreements with the Oneida Tribe of Indians

The Brown County Taxpayers Association has reviewed the “Cooperative Governance” and the “Law Enforcement Response and Mutual Assistance” agreements currently being proposed between the city of Green Bay and the Oneida Nation. The BCTA has serious concerns about the financial and jurisdictional impacts of these proposals, and the lack of transparency in the process to develop and consider them.

Financially, the proposed agreement would open the door for the Oneidas to move unlimited parcels into federal trust, removing them from the local tax rolls. This denies revenue to not only the City (some of which would be offset by payments from the Oneidas), but also the Green Bay Area Public School District, NWTC, and Brown County, all of which would see revenue losses. Those revenue losses will result in higher property tax rates for people in those tax jurisdictions.

Relative to jurisdiction, Section 16 of the Cooperative Governance Agreement, states “Nothing in this Agreement is intended to be a grant of jurisdiction from one party to the other. This Agreement is not intended to alter the existing jurisdiction of any party, and by approving this Agreement, neither party is agreeing or conceding to any jurisdiction of the other party which would not otherwise exist under the law.” How can this section be reconciled with Section 6a that states: “The Oneida Code of Laws contains zoning, building, nuisance, and other land use regulations (“Land Use Regulations”) which are applicable to the Nation, Tribal Members, and individuals and businesses leasing, occupying or otherwise using Tribal Land. City ordinances addressing Land Use Regulations do not apply to the Nation or Tribal Members on the Reservation.”? In fact, there are currently many Tribal properties and members under city ordinance jurisdiction. Or, how is it reconciled with Section 9 which enables land currently under City jurisdiction to transfer to the jurisdiction of the Nation and compels the City to facilitate such transfer? Tom Sladek, BCTA treasurer and former Green Bay alderman, wonders if the City can even enter into an agreement which removes the City’s right of action in these matters. “If the City were to do this, is there cause for legal action against the city by affected residents? Whoever heard of an incorporated municipality ceding its jurisdiction to the highest dollar?”

Transparency has been totally lacking in the development and consideration of the proposals. Thousands of city residents live in the affected area and nothing has been done by the City to advise them of what is being proposed and to gather their views on the matter. The Council and the affected residents do not have the benefit of financial and jurisdictional analyses of this agreement. Even some of the attachments and appendices cited in the proposals are missing! After the Mayor negotiated in secret, City government officials have discussed this matter only in “closed session”, even after the proposals became public documents. What is the justification for the secrecy?

The City Council needs to stop and think through the long-term implications of this action. They need to come out of their vault of secrecy and engage the public. They need to get answers to the many questions which are not answered by the documents the Mayor has shared with them.

The Brown County Taxpayers Association is a local group working to bring information and awareness to issues that affect tax policy or impose regulatory burdens.

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