

**SENECA COUNTY  
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

Special Board Meeting  
February 23, 2020

Call to Order

Chairman Hayssen called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

Roll Call of Members by the Clerk

All members of the Board of Supervisors answered roll call

Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence

Chairman's Agenda

Chairman Hayssen called the special meeting due to public safety concerns following the recent demolition of twelve Cayuga Nation buildings, in the middle of the night, by Clint Halftown, the federally recognized chief of the Nation. He said some people think this was an act of terrorism and fear the situation will escalate. Two factions exist within Cayuga Nation - those who support Clint Halftown as Chief, and those who oppose his leadership, which used to be called Unity Council. The buildings and businesses were under the leadership of the opposing faction.

Chairman Hayssen opened the floor to receive oral comments from the public.

- Robert Shipley, former county supervisor and Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, recommended the following actions be taken: (1) Demand the U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs immediately remove Clint Halftown as the BIA recognized leader of Cayuga Nation; (2) Urge Congressman Tom Reed to freeze the \$287K in US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) any funding to Cayuga Nation until a sensible and accountable Cayuga Nation leader is BIA recognized; (3) Urge Senators Schumer and Gellibrand to support the deployment of U.S. Marshalls to guard against further violence and possible loss to human life due to the actions by Clint Halftown.

- Lena Shipley, resident, Town of Waterloo expressed concern that the fighting between the two Cayuga Nation factions may risk the safety of the general public. She asked that the Board of Supervisors do whatever they can to keep public safe and prevent this situation from intensifying.

- Joseph Health, Esq., legal counsel for Cayuga Nation faction formally known as Unity Council, explained why Clint Halftown was not recognized as the Cayuga Nation chief. He was removed repeatedly from his position by the clan mothers several times under traditional Indian government. He described the building demolition as a “viciously unlawful act in complete violation of Cayuga Nation law”, carried out by a mercenary police force, all white, with no Cayugas.” He reported that these mercenaries threatened people with handguns and harm if they resisted. Mr. Heath referenced a letter dated December 18, 2019, from James P. Kennedy, Jr., U.S. Attorney, Western District of NY, to him and Daniel French, Esq, legal counsel for Clint Halftown, regarding the dispute between the two Cayuga

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factions, stated, “Questions regarding the lawful ownership of the property, operation of the businesses, the status of such property and business are largely questions of NYS law, and as the NY Court of Appeals decision in Cayuga Nation v. Campbell, et al., dated October 29, 2019, makes clear, such issue remain unsettled.” and “...any action taken by either side to the detriment of the other may result in negative legal consequences for such party. Mr. Heath asked the Board of Supervisors to urge the U.S. Attorney to prosecute Clint Halftown for carrying out this purposeful destruction of home and business of the Cayuga people.

- Leanna Young, member, Cayuga Nation, said the demolition of twelve buildings was an intentional act of intimidation by Clint Halftown, toward traditional Cayugas who do not recognize his leadership. The Cayuga people have a government of clan mothers and chiefs, not just one man. She said fifty to sixty people, thirty-two who are children, have been displaced. The children have been sent out of town for their own safety. They now fear that Halftown will demolish their homes. She said of the twelve building destroyed there was a school, a daycare and a longhouse – the school encouraged the preservation of Cayuga history and tradition, the longhouse is a traditional gathering place. She said almost seventy people were employed. The night of the demolition, men with guns forced people from their homes at gun point and held them throughout the night. She is heartbroken this is happening.

Mark Sinkiewicz, Seneca County District Attorney, said the matter is being given a great amount attention. Law enforcement is fully aware and prepared, that any damage or attempt to cause damage will be dealt with to the fullest extent of the law.

County Manager Rowe said Seneca County Code Enforcement did not issue any permits for the mass demolition, and a building permit would have had to be issued for each separate building that was razed.

Under Sheriff John Cleere said conflicts between the two Cayuga Nation factions have been ongoing for decades. Clint Halftown formed a police force to enforce tribal law on tribal owned property, and tribal members. Their police force does not have any authority over non-Indian citizens or property. He said the Seneca Falls Police Department was made aware on February 17 that Halftown would be “taking over” Lakeside Trading, a convenience store owned by Cayuga Nation at 2:00 a.m. Saturday, February 22. Seneca Falls Police Chief Stu Peenstra notified the NY State Police and the Sheriff’s Office. A Unified Command with an Operational Plan was developed involving all three law enforcement divisions. The FBI was also advised. Unmarked police vehicles, a drone, and confidential informants were used to monitor the situation. The public was not at risk and local law enforcement were prepared. No reports or observations of crimes against persons or persons in need of shelter. No child

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abuse or neglect complaint or reports were received. Local law enforcement maintained its command / operations for at least 24 hours and continues to monitor the situation.

Chairman Hayssen asked if there was anyone else interested in speaking, noting, that he saw legal counsel for Clint Halftown earlier in the room, however, that person had left the room and did not speak.

Executive Session

A motion to enter under executive session was offered by Sprvr. Lott, seconded by Sprv. Kronenwetter and carried by 2/3 majority vote. Requested to join the Board of Supervisor in executive session: County Manager Rowe, County Attorney Ettman, Seneca Falls Police Chief Peenstra, Emergency Manager Melissa Taylor, , Seneca County Undersheriff John Cleere, Attorney Brian Laudadio, Indian affairs legal counsel representing the Board of Supervisors. Time of executive session: 1:30 p.m. – 2:35 p.m.

Open Session

After a ten minutes recess, the Board of Supervisors reconvened in Open Session and adopted the following resolutions:

**SENECA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS URGES FEDERAL ACTION  
TO FREEZE FEDERAL FUNDS AWARDED TO CAYUGA NATION**

RESOLUTION NO. 49-2020, moved by Sprvr. Lott, second by Sprvr. Trout and adopted.

RESOLVED, that the Seneca County Board of Supervisors calls upon our federal representatives, Senator Charles Schumer, Senator Kristin Gillibrand and Congressman Tom Reed to take all action necessary to freeze the distribution of federal funds to the Cayuga Indian Nation (CIN) until such time as the leadership of the CIN complies with all local laws, including administrative regulations and addresses public safety concerns.

**SENECA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS REQUESTS U.S. MARSHALLS BE  
DEPLOYED TO REPLACE CAYUGA NATION SECURITY PERSONNEL**

RESOLUTION NO. 50-2020, moved by Sprvr. Lott, second by Sprvr. Kronenwetter and adopted.

RESOLVED, that Seneca County Board of Supervisors requests the deployment of U.S. Marshalls in place of Cayuga Indian Nation law security/enforcement personnel to prevent further violence and the possible loss of life in our community.

**SENECA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS REQUESTS THE U.S. ATTORNEY GENERAL  
INVESTIGATE RECENT CONDUCT BY CAYUGA NATION**

RESOLUTION NO. 51-2020, moved by Sprvr. Lott, second by Sprvr. Garlick Lorenzetti and adopted.

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RESOLVED, that the Seneca County Board of Supervisors call upon the U.S. Attorney for the Western District of New York, Honorable James P. Kennedy, Jr., to investigate and take appropriate action in light of the recent conduct of the Cayuga Indian Nation in Seneca County, in light of the U.S. Attorney General's letter to the factions of the Cayuga Indian Nation dated December 18, 2019.

Sprvr. Ferrara recognized and expressed appreciation for local law enforcement, New York State Troopers, District Attorney Sinkiewicz, the County Attorney for being on top of this and keeping public safety priority one.

Special Order Of The Day

The meeting was adjourned at 2:50 p.m.