

continued from page 7

## Housing Authority Flap Threatens to Derail CNO Budget

By Ed Crittenden

### 2005 Indian Housing Plan Funding Shift From HACN To Tribe

Home ownership built packages	1,000,000
Mortgage Assistance	2,920,000
Housing Rehab Construction	4,200,000
Housing rehab processing	411,000
Self Sufficiency Counseling	2,000,000
Administration and Planning	2,500,000
Individual Sanitary Facility Construction	176,460
<b>Total Money Shifted To Tribe</b>	<b>13,462,703</b>

Source: Tribal Documents

Baker voiced concerns that the total transfer of all housing funds into the Community Development Department under the total authority of tribal administration could have drastic and unforeseen effects on housing program clients and employees within the Housing Authority.

Baker made a motion to approve the 2006 Budget with an amendment to exclude the housing portion of the budget until the tribal administration could present the Council with a plan of action prior to that vote being taken.

Meredith Frailey from Mayes District 6 asked for clarification before the vote.

Baker explained that currently there was no operational plan accompanying the significant financial shift and stated, "No one has seen any kind of a plan or can tell us who will be doing what or how it's going to be done," he said. "We have been told the housing authority may do it, CNI might do it and it might be done by the tribe, but we have no assurances that jobs will not be lost or that service will continue," Baker continued.

Baker stated, "Because there is no concrete transition plan of action included within the 2006 budget outlining the effects on employees and the recipients of Housing Authority services, I can not in good conscious support this part of the budget." He added, "There are just too many families, which will be affected to just approve it and hope that everything works out right."

Sequoyah District 3 Councilor David Thornton said, "What bothers me about this is the specifics in the plan, because there's not any and I hate to pass a plan like that." He said, "I also realize that the rehab services and the emergency housing has been cut completely out and I don't understand why they would take emergency housing out of this budget. This has helped a lot of people and we currently have the best housing operation I have seen in my district.

"Another thing is that we can't tell if the people working in all of the district offices are going to be taken care of and with gas prices today if employees are told their job will be moved to one of the other offices and they must drive 70 miles a day to work they're going to have a hardship. We need to know what is going to be done and that we are going to get the same services" Thornton concluded, "Unless someone can promise me that, I'm not going to be for this."

Despite arguing against the proposed changes to the HACN budget, Thornton did an about-face and voted in favor, even though none of the information he had earlier demanded had been presented. Thornton's vote caused a tie of 7 to 7, allowing the Deputy Chief to cast the deciding vote in favor of handing over \$13 million in unregulated funds to the Principal Chief. Sequoyah District 3 Councilor Phyllis Yargee was absent from the meeting.

Trail of Tears District 2 Councilor Joe Crittenden, also a former housing commissioner said, "I see this as further dismantling of the housing

authority. There is no proof in this proposal that employees will be able to transfer jobs and families won't suffer. After the money leaves many times it's then too late to fix those kinds of problems. He said, "There are absolutely no specifics disclosing anything and I can't see changing things without any more of a game plan than just moving the purse down the street. I can't support this portion of the budget," stated Crittenden.

District 9 Councilor Chuck Hoskin stated that in his 11 years on the council he had seen much change but unfortunately in the recent years many had been the wrong kinds of changes. Hoskin was also troubled with the lack of specifics and pointed out that as the HACN Director, Sutherland had answered most of the questions asked that he was not sure. Hoskin said, "That is not a good answer for the Cherokee people because what we are talking about is over \$13 million to help them obtain homes and have a decent place to live. Unless we have specifics of how this will affect employees and our Cherokee people I think we need to take a longer look at this and understand exactly what this is going to do so that we get the best bang for our dollars."

Hoskin asked Sutherland again, "You're not sure how this is going to affect you and your employees are you?" Sutherland replied, "Not until the entire decision comes will we know what will stay at housing and what will be moved."

District 5 Councilor Linda O'Leary said "I've been contacted by enough people from my area to know that the Council Chambers would be full of employees right now if they weren't afraid of loosing their jobs because they have seen what has happened in the past."

Housing officials told the Cherokee Observer that prior to the current tribal administration the HACN consistently built an average of 250 homes each year. Housing Authority employees told the Observer that in a recent employee meeting Community Services Director Marvin Jones told employees that the administration "really doesn't care if they even build anymore new homes."

The Tulsa World reported that Mike Miller, Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma communication director said, "Its poor policy to build homes and give them away to people who are not willing to help themselves."

About the time the Oklahoma Department of Corrections contracted to begin building double wide mobile homes for Cherokee Nation, Principle Chief Chad Smith informed housing employees that he feels, "We have been building too good of houses for these people."

Shortly after the election in 2000 Smith requested that Design Metrics, a design team company, be contracted by the tribe to assess the housing system and recommend improvements in the management structure. Mark Rhodes from North Carolina and Smith's brother from Houston, Texas Kyle Smith headed up the project, which cost the tribe in excess of \$500,000.

That team determined scattered facilities would better serve the outlying areas. However what began as an assessment project grew into a total redesign of the system from an efficient centralized headquarters in Tahlequah into a decentralized agency of area offices throughout the 14 counties.

Within three years in 2003, after implementation of the initial plan, another design team was formed that was headed by Pat Ragsdale from the tribe. Shortly thereafter a series of massive layoffs began throughout the HACN employment base after the second team determined that Native American Housing Authority Self Determination Act, (NAHASDA) reserves would soon be depleted and there was inadequate operating capital to sustain the new administrative structure and also build houses.

Former Housing Authority Officials told Cherokee Observer correspondents that the redesign of the HACN duplicated upper level management positions into a top-heavy operation that consumed all of the housing service money.

Councilor Melvina Shotpouch, for Delaware District 5, who also served on the HACN Commission said, "Until this administration began fixing our housing services, the HACN was voted the number one housing authority in all of America." She said, "At one time we were the model and we had other tribes wanting to buy our business plan because we were building so many houses." She continued, "I don't see any houses being built with this plan except possibly with mortgage assistance but there are a lot of Cherokee people who live in poverty and can't qualify for those loans."

Shotpouch stated, "This is the third time under this administration we have seen a total change in the complete structure of the Housing Authority and the first time should have taught us enough to not approve this without something to hold them accountable."

Smith addressed the Council prior to the vote, stating, "We can't keep doing things like we have in the past whether we were a model or not, times have changed." He said that the question is not if the tribe is building houses it's if we are providing housing." Smith added that by providing people help who qualify for mortgage assistance programs the tribe can help more people than by subsidizing payments."

Smith pointed out there is 5000 people on the housing waiting list. He warned if the Council just wanted to do things as we had in the past he could tell the Cherokee people that was the decision of Council. Smith projects that by helping people get their own mortgages six times as many, 365, people can be assisted this year through his program rather than only 65 to 80.

Smith said, "The way the budget has been set up this budget account gives us flexibility to transition those programs but they won't be transitioned until we have a plan that's satisfactory to us all. By taking the housing budget out of the 2006 budget, you impair the ability to make that transition smooth."

Baker replied, "You say if we just blindly pass this, it will make it smooth but I want it concrete before I vote to pass it."

Smith said, "I told you we will come back and demonstrate the plan to you and we won't pull the trigger on the transition funding until we have that. It's not

a question of faith it's that we can't physically do it until the plan is in place."

After over an hour discussion Cara Cowen of Will Rogers District 7 the first of the Chief's political slate to speak to the issue suggested that the body should pass the entire budget as presented and to move the 2006 budget forward. She said that these issues could be discussed in the September Executive and Finance committee meeting when they might be more prepared to debate and discuss the issues both as a body as well as the staff. Cowen said, "After all, There is nobody going to spend the money in 30 days neither the HA or the CNO."

The motion on the floor was to amend the 2006 Fiscal Budget holding back the housing until the next meeting. The vote ended in a 7-7 tie with the Deputy Chief breaking the tie and voting to deny the amendment. Buel Anglin, Oolagah District 8, Cara Cowen, Will Rogers District 7, Jackie Bob Martin, Trail of Tears District 2, Don Garvin, Three Rivers District 3, Bill Johnson, Oolagah District 8, Meredith Swimmer Frailey, Mayes District 4, and David Thornton, Sequoyah District 3, voted No. Bill John Baker, Cherokee District 1, Audra Smoke Connor, Cherokee District 1, Joe Crittenden, Trail of Tears District 2, Johnny Keener, Mayes District 4, Chuck Hoskin, Craig District 9, Melvina Shotpouch, Delaware District 5, and Linda Hughes O'Leary, Delaware District 5, voted yes.

Following failure of the amendment to send the HACN funding back to committee, the full Council once again voted on whether to approve the budget as presented. Once again, the Council was divided 7 to 7 with the Deputy Chief casting the deciding vote, sending the \$300 plus million budgets on to the Chief's desk for his approval. Smith has said he will approve the budget as passed.

The Observer spoke with Councilor Joe Crittenden after the meeting. Crittenden said, "The housing issue is more than just who is holding the purse strings. The important concept that some don't seem to gather is that housing money can create the most productive jobs possible. These are not jobs that are consuming tribal resources. They are jobs that create a vital and appreciating product that serves a family for forty years or more.

When we inject housing money into construction and remodel we also create money supply in our communities. If we use good planning and take into consideration the strategy of the Multiplier Effect of economics, that says when one new dollar is injected into a community it changes hands at least seven times before it leaves that community we can create a multiple effect that leverages money supply throughout the Cherokee Nation communities and gives us the most bang for our buck. Council needs to mandate that Cherokee people are hired for these construction projects so the money is first injected right into tribal members' hands where they begin the circulation process.

If we begin to simply purchase existing homes, the bulk of the money expended goes right out of Oklahoma to pay off the underlying mortgage balance. The only money that remains here is the costs of the realtor, closing company and Mortgage Company that makes the new mortgage. Wisdom says we can provide housing for our people with this huge block of revenue and also create productive, non

Continued from page 7

## Chapter Two -The Birth and Growth of the Keetoowah Society

masonry; Master Masons are called from throughout the district, parade in formation to the grave site, and each cast a spate of dirt upon the grave. The positioning of three captains, a secretary and a treasurer within each lodge is also identical to that of the organizational structure of a Freemasonic lodge. In addition, the practice of transferring lodge membership upon moving from one district to another following explicit procedures with respect to references and recommendations from the previous lodge is also quite similar to that of Freemasonry. With respect to nearly every aspect of organizational structure and function, the Keetoowah society is strikingly similar to that of American Freemasonry. [156]

As much as it was a religious society, the Keetoowah Society was also a political one oriented to the promotion of "patriotism" and nationalism within the Cherokee Nation. Believing that their national identity had come from the divine Breathgiver and that there was a special bond between the "Giver-of-Breath" and the Keetoowah People, there was an intense religious nationalism: "With them the Great Spirit and national patriotism seemed to be synonymous terms." [157] Historian William McLoughlin describes the movement his new work *Cherokees and Christianity 1794-1870: Essays on Acculturation and Cultural Resistance*: "one key to the power of the movement was that it brought together both full-blooded traditionalists and full-blood Christians in the higher interest of unity and patriotism...[and] demonstrates that religion and politics cannot be separated but they can be transcended in the greater interest of national survival." [158] The rituals and activities associated with the Keetoowah Society were designed to unite the fullbloods for political action. Its primary goal was to create a nationalist organization that would assure fullblood dominance of the Nation's Council in order to preserve Cherokee sovereignty. [159] In the holistic worldview of the Cherokee people, religion and politics could not be separated: [160]

A few members of men of the society met secretly and discussed the condition of the country where they lived.

consumptive jobs that create more money right here in our Cherokee communities. Council should have tremendous oversight in how this entire process of housing money ultimately and best affects our communities. That is the plan that we deserve to see before making any such significant change to our system and that we were demanding to see prior to a vote. This Council can not continue to turn a blind eye to their duty and expect there not to be serious future consequences." stated Crittenden.

Since the vote by Council the Observer found the consensus was of most persons interviewed to be the bottom line issues that occurred were neither the HACN nor the tribe will be building any new homes this year and that all decisions in organization and use of the housing money must now clear through tribal administration under the Chief. Another area of concern was that client waiting lists for housing are expected to be out the window with new methods of assessing who will receive services first, according to sources within the tribe.

### One of Chief Chad Smith Comments!

The (Dr.) Dept head of CNO medical services, said "The Cherokee people need teeth". **Chief Chad Smith said "Let them eat vegies".**

**We have less services now to the Cherokee people under Chief Smith administration! So why do we need to keep him? We Don't!**

The name Cherokee was in danger. The Cherokee as a Nation were about to disintegrate. It seemed intended to drown our Cherokee Nation and destroy it. For that reason, we resolve to stop it from scattering or forever lose the name Cherokee. We must love each other and abide by treaties made with the federal government. We must cherish them in our hearts. Second, we must abide by the treaties made with other races of people. Third, we must abide by our constitution and laws and uphold the name of the Cherokee Nation. Right here we must endeavor to strengthen our society. Our society must be called Keetoowah. [161]

T.L. Ballenger reaffirms the above position when he states:

In 1858, when the clash between the North and the South seemed inevitable, and these men saw that at least the slaveholding group of the Cherokees would fight against the Federal Government, they feared the total extermination of the Cherokee nation. It was then that they conceived the idea of forming the full-blood Cherokees, the anti-slavery Keetoowahs, into a large political entity that might be able to salvage the Cherokee lands and other possessions and perpetuate the nation, in case of a Northern victory. Thus came about the writing of the constitution of the Keetoowahs. [162]

William McLoughlin, in his *After the Trail of Tears: the Cherokees' struggle for sovereignty, 1839-1880*, stated that the "ultimate goal of the Keetoowah Society was to define a 'true Cherokee patriot' as a full blood, true to national values, national unity, and Cherokee self-determination through consensus." [163] Its organizational structure having spread throughout the Cherokee Nation, the Keetoowah Society was able to organize a grass-roots political movement among the dispossessed fullbloods in order to provide for majority rule within the Cherokee nation and end the rule of the plutocrats. As its activities were carried out fully in the Cherokee language, the message of the Keetoowah Society carried both a cultural currency and a relative insularity from the larger political discourse. The Keetoowah Constitution was read and approved, revised and amended, and updated nearly a dozen times between 1858-1861 at Keetoowah conventions spread throughout the Cherokee Nation. Each lodge was responsible for keeping a copy of the Constitution, thoroughly indoctrinating their membership in it, and providing for the implementation of the political organizing strategy expressed in the Constitution. At the conventions, political candidates were recruited to run for National Office and the grassroots membership was organized into a populist movement to redefine the political soul of the Cherokee Nation; those who had lost their voice suddenly found it in a reaffirmation of the "Kituwah Spirit." A new nation was being born. [164] In discussing the political idealism of the Keetoowah Society, many recent authors mitigate against the abolitionist nature of the Keetoowah Society with curious statements such as "it was not an abolitionist or antislavery organization, although its members strongly believed that the mixed-blood, educated slaveholders were usurping power and trying to lead the Nation into a fatal alliance with the South," [165] or "It would probably be more correct to describe the society as not being pro-slavery, rather than being anti-slavery." [166] However, contemporaries viewed the society quite differently: [The Keetoowahs are a] Secret Society established by Evan Jones, a missionary, and at the service of Mr. John Ross, for the purposes of abolishing the Cherokee and putting out of the way all who sympathized with the Southern State... [167] It was distinctly an anti-slavery organization. The slave-holding Cherokees, who constituted the wealthy and more intelligent class, naturally aligned themselves with the South, while loyal Cherokees became more and more opposed to slavery." [168] While some of the members of the Society were pro-slavery in their sentiments, yet they loved their country more than slavery -- while the majority of its members were positive and strong anti-slavery men. Many were

Continued in next month issue