

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**City of Airway Heights to Reduce Police, Fire and Emergency Services to Kalispel Tribal Property
*Tribe stopped making payments in 2019, while continuing to tap City Services***

Airway Heights, Wash. -- The City of Airway Heights City Council adopted a Resolution tonight that will reduce the level of public services it provides to the Kalispel Tribe. Citing the Tribe owes more than \$1.5 million in contract payments, the City stated it cannot afford to subsidize the high volume of police and fire calls arising from the Tribal property. These services, estimated at a \$1.5 million annual cost to the City to provide, include law enforcement, fire and emergency medical services. Effective Dec. 31, 2022, the City may respond, subject to availability of resources, to calls for police, fire and emergency services arising from the Tribal property where there is an imminent threat to human life.

“Our City is experiencing rapid growth, placing a significant increase in demand on infrastructure and public safety services and it’s unsustainable to subsidize the Tribe’s operations while serving the public safety of all citizens without payments from the Tribe,” said Albert Tripp, City of Airway Heights City Manager. “As our City grows, the tax base is not, even as residents and local businesses pay their fair share. The entire community is impacted as a result and the City’s resources are spread thin.”

Tripp said the gap has been created by the Kalispel Tribe, which has stopped making contractual payments while continuing to draw upon city services. The Kalispel Tribe owns 40 acres of land for its casino operations and 250 acres of land within the city limits used for commercial, residential and industrial uses. In 1996, the City entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Tribe to pay \$374,250 annually to mitigate impacts of its gaming operations. In 2006, the Tribe entered into an Intergovernmental Agreement with the City of

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Airway Heights and Spokane County to support the use and development of its 250-acre property.

The Tribe has failed to make payments on either of its contracts since 2019. Total unpaid annual payments due and owing the City of Airway Heights exceed \$1,479,000.00. In the meantime, Tripp estimates cost of services provided by the City to the Tribe at an estimated \$1.5 million per year.

Tripp said that numerous efforts for the City to reach a resolution with the Tribe have been unsuccessful to date, yet he remains hopeful the parties can work together to find a solution.

“This action is being taken to best serve the public safety of all citizens in the City of Airway Heights,” he added.

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