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Office of the Principal Chief

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October 14, 2026

TO: Dr. Corey Bunch, Chief of Staff
FR: Chuck Hoskin, Jr.
Principal Chief
CC: Bryan Warner, Deputy Chief
Cabinet / Sub-cabinet
Ginger Reeves, Executive Director of Realty
Jon Asbill, Senior Advisor for Capital Planning
Jerri Killer, Executive Director of Housing Programs
Council Leadership

Administration Memorandum Preliminarily Designating the Bell School Property Under Management and Control of the Language Department

The purpose of this memorandum is the preliminarily designation of property located in Adair County known as Bell School as a Cherokee Nation Language Village under the management of the Cherokee Nation Language Department, with a permanent designation pending the submission of a capital and operations plan consistent with this memorandum.

I. Background

Bell School consists of certain real property and buildings located in or around 473800 E. 890 Road, Stilwell OK, in Adair County, owned by Belfonte Public School District. Pursuant to the laws of the State of Oklahoma, Belfonte has expressed its intent to donate Bell School to the Housing Authority of the Cherokee Nation, triggering a state law¹ requirement that the property be developed for housing and community development, subject to the state law mandated sale of personal property which the school estimates to be valued at approximately \$26,000.

¹ See [Oklahoma House Bill 1334](#), which was used to acquire Attucks School from Vinita Public Schools. Although media reports reflect that the purpose of HB 1334 is to encourage the development of housing, nothing in the text of the statute requires that a housing authority use surplus school real property for housing, which is why the absence of housing at Attucks is of no concern. In any case, the use of Belfonte's school for housing as outlined herein is plainly for housing, albeit via HACN effectively delegating the use of the property to Cherokee Nation.

Cherokee Nation, pursuant to the Durbin Feeling Language Preservation Act, has prioritized language revitalization as a high national interest. Housing and community development are portions of our language revitalization strategy, as evidenced by the development of the Language Village and the establishment of such units of the Language Department as Speaker Services and Peer Recovery.

Secretary Paden has expressed that housing, and community development remains a key element of our language preservation strategy and that expansion is warranted. He has expressed that the concept of a “language nest” furthers this strategy by providing housing, social and economic support solutions for families who possess high, and in our current stage of language revitalization therefore rare, incidents of language proficiency within the family unit.

Secretary Paden recommends the development of Bell School as a language nest, transforming the property into a multi-family housing unit which meets the housing needs of the resident families and supports their social, cultural and economic wellbeing. Secretary Paden suggests that revitalizing Bell School, rather than simply constructing a multi-family housing complex anew, is the correct strategy in view of the historic significance of Bell School.

The acquisition of Bell School, without more, meets certain interests of the Cherokee Nation in strategic land acquisition. That alone, however, could leave the property without achieving its highest and best use, leaves it vulnerable to damage by nature or vandalism and could erode confidence in the community about the property’s future

II. Direction

A. Acquisition

Cherokee Nation, by the Housing Authority of the Cherokee Nation, will acquire Bell School from Belafonte, continuing a process underway under the direction of Chief of Staff Corey Bunch.

B. Purchase of Personal Property

Cherokee Nation shall purchase the personal property associated with Bell School in an amount not to exceed \$30,000, from a funding source identified by the Chief of Staff or, by default, funds available under the Public Health and Wellness Fund Act. Said purchased personal property shall then be disposed of in accordance with Cherokee Nation law and policy.

C. Nominal Fee Lease from HACN to Cherokee Nation

HACN, upon acquisition of Bell School, shall lease the property to Cherokee Nation for a nominal amount, such lease containing the following provisions:

- Nominal annual lease fee
- “Evergreen” annual renewal
- Operations and maintenance responsibilities borne by Cherokee Nation.

***D. Preliminary Management and Control of Property to Language Department;
\$250k in PHWFA Surplus Funds authorized***

Management and control of Bell School, following the aforementioned acquisition and lease, shall be preliminarily under the Cherokee Nation Language Department pending the approval by the Principal Chief of the “Bell School Capital and Operations Plan,” described in part E, below.

By this memorandum the Language Department is authorized \$250,000 during this preliminary management and control period for the purposes of:

- Developing the Bell School Capital and Operations Plan, engaging such third-party service providers as necessary and coordinating the capital plan with Senior Advisor on Capital Planning Jon Asbill.
- Protecting, securing and eliminating public safety risks associated with the property during this period.

***E. Secretary Paden to Provide “Bell School Capital and Operations Plan” by
December 31, 2026***

On before December 31, 2026, Secretary Paden shall provide a “Bell School Capital and Operations Plan” consistent with this memorandum, in furtherance of Cherokee Nation’s language revitalization strategy, in consultation with Senior Advisor for Capital Planning Asbill and with specific proposed capital and annual operating outlays derived from the Public Health and Wellness Fund Act or other sources. Upon approval, management and control of Bell School will be made permanently to the Language Department.



Chuck Hoskin, Jr.
Principal Chief