



Gordon "Ollie" Wareham, center, holds up the cake that was given to him by the Seminole Tribal Gaming Commission on Oct. 24 at Tribal headquarters. STGC held a gathering for Wareham, who stepped down from the commission after serving from 2004 to 2017. From left, Commissioner Jarrid Smith, Commission Chairman Allen Huff, Wareham, Commission Executive Director Gordon Dickie, Commissioner Mitch Osceola and Kyle Doney, who is expected to replace Wareham. (Kevin Johnson)

HOLLYWOOD — For someone who wasn't even among the top choices for a seat on the Seminole Tribal Gaming Commission, Gordon "Ollie" Wareham made the most of his opportunity as a commissioner.

When Wareham was asked to join the commission in 2004 he was told he wasn't the first or second choice to fill an open seat.

"I think I was eighth or ninth," recalled Wareham, who spoke to an audience of about 60 STGC employees Oct. 24 as the commission bid farewell to Wareham in the auditorium lobby at Tribal headquarters in Hollywood.

Regardless of where his name fell on the list of choices, Wareham accepted the offer and proudly served on the commission for 13 years, including about 10 years as vice-chairman. He opted to step down from the commission in October because he serves as Hollywood's representative on the Tribe's Board of Directors, a seat he was elected to by voters in May.

"Technically, there's no rule saying that I have to give this up, not yet," Wareham said. "That's going to be in the next resolution in November that you can't have this position and be an elected official."

The five-member commission is the regulatory body of Seminole Gaming. Among its duties is to set rules and regulations, maintain the integrity of the casinos and protect casino assets.

Gordon Dickie, the commission's executive director, praised Wareham's lengthy tenure on the commission.

"Ollie has been a great asset to the commission, always asks a lot of pointed questions, always has our back out there, always concerned about policy procedures, always engaged, always involved,

comes to our budget sessions, goes on the road to shows, networks with a lot of people. He's been a savior to us. We're really going to miss him," Dickie told the gathering.

With fellow commissioners seated nearby, including Chairman Allen Huff, Mitch Osceola and Jarrid Smith, Dickie presented a plaque to Wareham. The recognition was inscribed with "In appreciation for your dedicated service October 2004 to October 2017."

Wareham humbly deflected the attention away from him and instead thanked the employees for their dedication.

"It's not just a job, it's not just a paycheck, but it's that passion to be the best," he told the group that included commission managers and agents and surveillance managers and agents. "I can actually say you are the best in this country because when I go out there and talk to people they talk about us, they talk about this organization, about Seminole Gaming. We are the best in the world. We are the example and that means everything to us."

Pending Tribal Council approval, Wareham's replacement on the commission will be Kyle Doney.

"Kyle is very qualified, very smart and willing to learn," Wareham said.

Wareham's farewell came a day before the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Hollywood held a ceremony to celebrate the construction of its massive \$1.5 billion expansion project, which will include a 35-story guitar-shaped hotel, thousands of more slot machines, nearly 200 table games and an 18,000-square foot poker room as the Tribe's gaming entities continue to grow.

"They are a great group, but they're ready to go into a new challenge, a new chapter, and that's the expansion of the guitar," Wareham said. "They're bringing in new games, more tables, more machines, and growing to something I don't think this world has seen."

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Originally Printed by the Seminole Tribune