

VERMONT
COMMISSION
ON
NATIVE
AMERICAN
AFFAIRS



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Eugene Rich



VCNAA February 8, 2017
Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Melody Brook, Vice-Chair; Carol Irons, Paul Fassler, Cheryl O'Neill, Carol McGranaghan, Joelen Mulvaney, Rich Holschuh and Eugene Rich. Lucy Cannon-Neel, Chair (via phone until 1:25 p.m.)

Members Absent: Lucy Cannon-Neel, Chair (after 1:25 p.m.)

Guests: John Moody, Sharon; Jeff Benay; Representative Brian Cina; Jess Robinson, VDHP; Jenni Lavoie, VDHP. Ms. Lavoie records the minutes at the request of the commission.

The meeting was brought to order by Melody Brook at 1:02 pm at 1 National Life Drive, Montpelier, in the Montpelier conference room.

1. Changes to the Agenda

Eugene Rich requested a discussion about the Swanton Repatriation Efforts;; the item was added under new business.

John Moody inquired if the commission would like an update on the efforts of the Abenaki Nation Coalition in regards to the dam relicensing as a companion to Rich Holschuh's report on the dam relicensing. Mr. Moody added his report under CT River Hydro Re-Licensing (see Action Item e).

2. Public Comment

Lucy Cannon-Neel, who was joining by phone, stated that members of the Nulhegan Tribe participated in Diversity Day at North Country Union Junior High School. The program was a success and the school asked for another program, which will include opening and closing ceremonies.

John Moody reported that prior to leaving office, President Obama signed the order returning the remains of the "Ancient One" to the tribes of Washington state. The discovery of the remains in 1996 led to considerable controversy; they were reburied February 18, 2017, by the tribes in an undisclosed location.

3. Approve January 11, 2017 Minutes

Consensus was reached to approve the January 11, 2017, meeting minutes with no changes noted.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Action Plan

a. **Developing Teaching Materials**

Paul Fassler inquired if commissioners had received feedback or held of interest from those in their communities about becoming a trainer for the native teachings that have been developed. There has been no indication of interest yet and Paul asked commissioners to spread the word to help garner interest.

b. **Dept. of Health – Native Style Treatment & Recovery Program in Swanton for Alcohol & Opiate Addiction.**

Topic tabled until next month.

c. **Improve Communication with Tribes**

Rich Holschuh reported that he continues to maintain the commission's Facebook page.

d. **Native Traditions Conference**

Melody Brook stated there is interest in holding another conference this year. She would like to gauge interest from the community regarding an appropriate date and location, and what sessions would work best this year.

e. **CT River Hydro Re-Licensing**

Rich Holschuh stated there have been no new developments since the January meeting. Interested parties are waiting to hear from TransCanada regarding the responses to the Traditional Cultural Properties study.

John Moody reported that the Abenaki Nation Coalition has attended three Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) meetings lead by the Connecticut River Watershed Council, which has recently put de-commissioning the dams on the agendas. Additionally, the watershed council has added conducting studies of fish in the river to the agenda.

f. **Indigenous People's Day**

Topic tabled until Representative Cina's arrival.

g. **Legislation for Native Scholarships to be Funded by Native License Plates**

Eugene Rich reported that he provided local Swanton Representative Brian Savage copies of the draft bill previously written by former VCNAA commissioner Andrew Beaupré. Mr. Rich indicated that Representative Savage had delivered the drafts to the legislative counsel to amend, and the bills may be introduced once the counsel completes review. Additional discussion focused

around the idea of a children's contest for the image on the license plates.

h. Statewide Title VII

Topic tabled until next month.

i. Native Student Recognition

Melody Brook and Carol McGranaghan provided commissioners with a handout detailing their proposal for the Vermont Indigenous Youth Essay Contest. The essay contest—How does your indigenous heritage inform the way that you walk through the world? —is for youth who identify as Native American or First Nations. It will have two categories, one for middle school students and the other for high school students. Students that place in the essay contest will receive an award from the commission and will get to select from a list of experiences with an indigenous community member. Deadline for submissions will be May 15, 2017.

2. Invitations to Governor and New Administration

Paul Fassler reported that three letters have been distributed to the new administration; to the Governor, Secretary of the Agency of Commerce and Community Development, and to the Commissioner of the Department of Housing and Community Development.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Representative Brian Cina

Representative Brian Cina, Burlington, joined the meeting to discuss three items that involve the native community in Vermont. He provided commission members with a brief explanation of the legislative process from when the bill is drafted with the legislative counsel through the changes that can occur when the bill reaches a committee. Commissioners shared their appreciation of Representative Cina's efforts and reached a consensus to support the two bills and proposed resolution.

a. Proposed Bill to Exempt Recognized Tribes from Property Taxes on Sacred Sites

Representative Cina stated that this proposed bill was based on a conversation held with the Missisquoi tribe. The bill would exempt recognized tribes from paying property taxes on sacred sites currently within the tribes' holdings, or future sacred sites acquired by the tribe(s).

b. Indigenous People's Day Bill

Representative Cina reported that this proposed bill would change Columbus Day to Indigenous People's Day. This bill is being proposed in both the House and Senate.

c. Standing Rock Resolution

Representative Cina indicated there is potential to draft a resolution from the House in support of the Standing Rock Sioux. This resolution would be largely based on the proclamation recently distributed by the commission.

2. State Archaeologist Report

Jess Robinson reported to commissioners that he has recently revised the “Guidelines to Conducting Archaeology in Vermont.” These new guidelines are currently posted on the Division for Historic Preservations website.

Jess also advised the commission of the new Native American permanent exhibit, which will be located at the Chimney Point State Historic Site in Addison. It will open in May 2017.

3. Brattleboro West River Petroglyphs – Update on Potential to Acquire and Preserve the Riverfront Land.

Rich Holschuh stated that there is riverfront land for sale believed to be adjacent to the West River petroglyphs. Mr. Holschuh met with the regional director of the Vermont Land Trust to brainstorm potential options and other logistical aspects of acquiring the property. Paul Fassler inquired what Mr. Holschuh sees as the commissions role in this process. Mr. Holschuh advised future commission endorsement of the preservation of the property and assistance finding funding sources may prove helpful.

4. Potential Meeting with New Hampshire Commission on Native American Affairs (NHCNAA)

Rich Holschuh inquired if commissioners were still interested in reaching out to the New Hampshire commission to hold a joint meeting. Melody Brook reported she has sent an inquiry via the NHCNAA general email, with no response as of this meeting.

5. Swanton Repatriation Efforts

Eugene Rich stated that the Peabody Museum in Massachusetts, is in possession of grave goods and Native American remains. Mr. Rich will be coordinating a meeting to start the process of repatriation. Jess Robinson has offered technical assistance as needed with the process.

Adjourn 3:42 p.m.