

VERMONT  
COMMISSION  
ON  
NATIVE  
AMERICAN  
AFFAIRS



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Walker Brook  
Trudy Ann Parker  
Carol Irons  
Cheryl O'Neil  
Paul Fassler  
Joelen Mulvaney  
Rich Holschuh



VCNAA May 11, 2016  
Meeting Minutes

**Members Present:** Lucy Cannon-Neel, Chair; Jeffrey Benay, Vice-Chair; Carol Irons, Paul Fassler, Walker Brook, Rich Holschuh and Trudy Ann Parker.

**Members Absent:** Cheryl O'Neill and Joelen Mulvaney

**Guests:** Donald Parker, Lunenburg; John Moody, Sharon; Duncan Matthewson, CCV; Jess Robinson, VDHP; Dale Azaria, VDHP; Jenni Lavoie; VDHP.

The meeting was brought to order by Lucy Cannon-Neel, Chair at 1:06 pm at 133 State Street, Room 410.

**1. Changes to the Agenda**

Lucy Cannon-Neel requested the following changes to the agenda:

- Old Business Item 2 – CT River Hydro Re-Licensing, moved to Item 1
- New Business Item 1 – Commission Policies & Procedures, moved after CT River Hydro Re-Licensing

**2. Public Comment**

John Moody provided commission members with a handout, a map of the Abenaki homeland. He also relayed information to the commission about a survey dig in the Western part of the state and indicated great concern about the parties involved, including the state. Jess Robinson, State Archaeologist, conveyed to the commission the details surrounding the project and the parties, including the Elnu Tribe, that were notified. Discussion relating to the project, communication and the commissions role in these projects, ensued between commission members. Duncan Matthewson, CCV, communicated to the commission he'd also spoken to the archaeologists involved in the project and believed them to be very collaborative, with a large focus on education and preservation.

**3. Approve April 13, 2016 Minutes.**

Consensus was reached to approve the April 13, 2016 minutes with no changes.

**OLD BUSINESS**

### **1. CT River Hydro Re-Licensing**

Rich Holschuh advised commission members that he had reached out to Dale Azaria to clarify the commissions potential role in the re-licensing process, to which Dale addressed during the public comment portion of the meeting. Rich also advised that the Elnu Tribe have made the decision to become an interested party in the re-licensing process, which may nullify the initial question about any commission involvement. Paul Fassler inquired if the commission has any legal authority to ask that any project cease. Dale advised the commission could not, and neither could the Division. She also informed the commission about the Division for Historic Preservation's role in these types of regulatory reviews.

Lucy Cannon-Neel moved to break from 2:14pm – 2:25pm

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **1. Commission Policies & Procedures**

##### **a. Grants**

Lucy Cannon-Neel explained that the question was raised about if the commission could be awarded a grant and how those monies would be held and dispersed. Dale Azaria advised that the statute does allow the commission to seek grant money. She will discuss the topic further with the financial administrator at the Division and come back next month with more information about the logistical aspects of accepting a grant.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

#### **2. Action Plan**

##### **a. Developing Teaching Materials**

Carol Irons advised that outreach with the tribal elders continues, as well as outreach with other Native folks. Carol also spoke about the dissertation written by Mary Ellen Squire that focuses on cultural dynamics of the Abenaki. Many commissioners were very interested in this resource.

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

Topic tabled until next month.

##### **c. Statewide Title VII**

Lucy Cannon-Neel advised no update on this topic this month.

##### **d. Improve Communications with Tribes**

Rich Holschuh advised that he continues to maintain the commission's Facebook page. Paul Fassler asked if people felt that the communication lines were improving, to which many people agreed.

Commission members also discussed communication between themselves, members of the public and the state. Jeff Benay speaking on the record, “I’ve got to say for the record that the job that Jess has done, I couldn’t be happier. This is probably one of the best hires from an Abenaki perspective, one of the best hires I’ve ever seen. The state does not have a good track record, this is a really really important hire. He’s honest, he’s smart and he’s sensitive. So to have Jess in this position, from my perspective, I look at it and think over the last 38 years, if we had Jess many ago, we wouldn’t have needed 30 some odd years to get state recognition, we would’ve been a lot better off. Because we’ve dealt with so many people, who were concerned with political correctness and were concerned with just watching their own tails. Every conversation I’ve had with Jess has always been predicated on, he’s interested in the community and what’s best for the community and well that’s a breath of fresh air and so at least from me, I couldn’t be happier you’re in the position you’re in.”

**e. Native Traditions Conference**

Lucy Cannon-Neel advised the name of the conference will be “Affirming Traditions”. The date, venue, a portion of the agenda and a couple presenters have been decided. Commission members discussed the potential for stipends for presenters and discussed if the event should be open to the public, with decisions of yes to the former and no to the latter.

**f. Bullying and Harassment in Vermont Schools Study**

Topic tabled until next month.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**2. Announcements**

Lucy Cannon-Neel advised commission members of the public information request from Mr. Tim Camisa’s lawyer and advised that the Division for Historic Preservation had also received the letter and all applicable information had been sent.

Lucy also provided commission members with an email communication she received from a citizen looking for information on Abenaki social services. Rich advised he also had contact with this citizen. Jeff Benay agreed to make contact.

Additionally, Lucy is waiting to follow-up with Joelen Mulvaney regarding the gentleman from Canada that inquired about his affiliation with the Missisquoi. Lucy reviewed mail correspondence sent to the commission; information from FirstLight about re-licensing and an invitation to the Great Falls Discovery Center, in Turner Falls, MA, on Saturday, May 21 at 1:00pm, to commemorate the 340<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Great Falls Massacre. Rich Holschuh also spoke about this event and indicated that tribal leaders from Elnu were planning on attending.

Finally, Lucy advised that she attended the recent Pow Wow at Dartmouth that was very well attended by the Abenaki.

Jess Robinson advised he has been going through documents kept by the prior state archaeologist and there are several fliers and other printed materials from Missisquoi that he would send back, if they are interested in having them.

Rich advised he attended a symposium at Dartmouth a couple weeks ago, Water, River, Life Giver. He wanted commission members to know that local Abenaki drummed and sang at the start and closing of the symposium and each presenter acknowledged the local Abenaki before they began.

He also advised that the Town of Vernon was considering building a natural gas fired power plant, but that plan seemingly has gone away. Vernon is still looking to fill the void left by Vermont Yankee, so another project could be forthcoming.

Additionally, Rich advised that Fred Wiseman's continuing series of courses in Ethnobotany at the Archaeology Heritage Center are ongoing, as well as a weeklong Indigenous Food Class at the Maritime Museum.

Finally, Rich provided commission members with a handout regarding the possible renaming of the falls near the gorge at Rockway Mills to Sokiki Falls. Commission members discussed adding this to the agenda in June. He added that Roger Sheehan of the Elnu Tribe has also backed this project.

Jeff Benay advised that he has a meeting with UVM President about Title VII. This topic will also be added to the June meeting agenda.

Finally, Jeff advised that a Federal program is soliciting grant readers to read and evaluate grant applications that specifically apply to Native grants. Any interested parties should contact Jeff.

## **Adjourn**

Respectfully submitted,  
Jenni Lavoie