

VERMONT
COMMISSION
ON
NATIVE
AMERICAN
AFFAIRS



VCNAA September 13, 2017
Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Melody Brook, Chair; Carol McGranaghan, Vice Chair; Andrea Brett, Secretary; Carol Irons, Paul Fassler, Cheryl O'Neill, Rich Holschuh, Jennifer Morton-Dow, and Eugene Rich.

Guests: John Moody, Sharon; Dale Azaria, VDHP; Jess Robinson, VDHP; Jennifer Lavoie, VDHP

The meeting was brought to order by Melody Brook at 1:04 pm at 1 National Life Drive, Montpelier, in the Montpelier conference room.



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COMMISSION
Melody Brook, Chair
Carol McGranaghan, Vice Chair
Andrea Brett, Secretary
Carol Irons
Cheryl O'Neil
Paul Fassler
Rich Holschuh
Eugene Rich
Jennifer Morton-Dow

1. Introduction of New / Returning Commission Members

Commission members and guests introduced themselves and all welcomed new commission members Jennifer Morton-Dow and Andrea Brett.

2. Changes to Agenda

There were no changes to the agenda.

3. VCNAA Statutory Protocols and Procedures

Dale Azaria, General Counsel for the Division for Historic Preservation, provided commission members with copies of: ACT 107, which created the Vermont Commission on Native American Affairs, Vermont's open meeting law rules, and the state code of ethics and conflict of interest policies. Thereafter, Dale provided an overview of the commission's established authority under statute, typical procedures for operating within the open meeting law, and how those apply to the commission's email communications, voting and recusal.

4. Approve June 14, 2017 Minutes

Consensus was reached to approve the June 14, 2017 meeting minutes with no changes noted.

5. Public Comment

John Moody asked for a moment of silence to observe the lives lost in Vermont between the fall season of 2016 through summer of 2017.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Action Plan

a. Abenaki Cultural Regeneration Project

Carol Irons stated that there is interest in holding another week-long cultural immersion retreat, as well as advanced training for those who have attended the initial retreat earlier this year. Obtaining funding for this event continues to be a challenge, however.

b. Tribal Inter-Communication

Commissioners indicated that while attempts to include and disseminate information to the tribes have increased, these efforts have not resulted in much meaningful feedback. Commissioners indicated this item should remain on the action plan.

c. Native Traditions Conference

Melody Brook gave a summary of last year's conference and noted that several community members have asked for the event to be held again this year. Discussion focused on funding options and the logistics and timing of the event this year.

d. CT River Hydro Re-Licensing

Rich Holschuh reported that the re-licensing process continues to move forward, albeit slowly. Mr. Holschuh did note that he recently participated in a meeting with FirstLight's Ethnographer about the Traditional Cultural Properties (TCP) study for the project.

e. Indigenous Peoples Day – New initiatives, Planning an observance, Other localities, and Strategies for the next legislative session

Rich Holschuh reported and passed along the executive proclamation for the observance of the 2017 Indigenous People's Day, which was recently proclaimed by Governor Scott's office. Commissioners noted that several towns continue to weigh the possibility of declaring October 9th Indigenous Peoples Day at a municipal level. Mr. Holschuh briefly summarized the events planned for October 9th in Brattleboro.

f. VT Public Utilities Commission Docket 8880 Vermont Yankee Sale – Elnu Intervention Status

Rich Holschuh provided new commission members with a brief update about the decommissioning of the Vermont Yankee plant. He then summarized the Motion to Intervene and Prefiled Testimony he filed with the Public Utility Commission on behalf of the Elnu tribe.

2. New Hampshire and Vermont Joint Commission Meeting

Melody Brook indicated that she has been in communications with the New Hampshire Commission on Native American Affairs and they have extended an invitation to the Vermont commission members to attend their October 10th or January 2018 meeting. Commission members tentatively agreed to the January meeting and Melody advised she would follow up to confirm details.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Goals and New Directions

Commission members discussed the goals and action items they would like to focus on for the 2017/2018 session. Items from the prior session to be continued in this year's action plan include the Abenaki Cultural Regeneration Project, Tribal Inter-Communications, Native Traditions Conference, and Indigenous People's Day. Jennifer Morton-Dow indicated that she would like to focus on working with the Department of Children and Families to increase awareness and set policy goals for Native youth in the foster system. Additional discussion on new action items will continue at the October meeting.

2. Election of Officers

Carol Irons made a motion to nominate Melody Brook as commission chair, Carol McGranaghan seconded. Motion carried 8-0. Carol Irons made a motion to nominate Carol McGranaghan as vice chair, Eugene Rich seconded. Motion carried 8-0.

3. Secretary Report: Correspondence

Melody Brook inquired about the process of communicating any commission business that is received by the Division for Historic Preservation. Jess Robinson and Jenni Lavoie indicated that all postal mail received by the Division is held unopened and brought to the next commission meeting. Any phone or email inquiries received are disseminated right away. Thereafter, discussion focused on a nominating a commission member to serve as secretary. It was determined that the secretary would be responsible for creating the agenda, drafting commission correspondence, and potentially recording the meeting minutes in the future. Andrea Brett expressed interest in the position. Paul Fassler made a motion to have Andrea Brett serve as commission secretary, and Eugene Rich seconded. Motion carried 8-0.

4. Native American Mascot position

Rich Holschuh inquired if the commission would like to codify a position on the topic of Native American mascots. Discussion then focused on the scope of the issue and if increased educational outreach in specific cases would be a better approach. Commission members indicated they would like to revisit the topic at a future meeting.

5. Cultural Educational Material Procurement for Educators

Melody Brook advised commission members that the Vermont Historical Society (VHS) is in the process of updating and compiling Native American cultural materials to be used by home schools and educators. If any member or tribe has documents or other information that could be used for this purpose, she asked commissioners or tribal members to let her know or send them directly to VHS. Rich Holschuh inquired if there is a current list of resources available to educators, or if one could be created.

6. Announcements

There were no announcements.