



VERMONT  
COMMISSION  
ON  
NATIVE  
AMERICAN  
AFFAIRS

VCNAA MEETING MINUTES

DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED

March 9, 2022

GoTo Virtual Meeting



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COMMISSION  
Carol McGranaghan, Chair  
Carol Irons, Vice Chair  
Hillary Hoffmann, Secretary  
Patrick Lamphere  
Beverly Little-Thunder  
Lucy Neel  
Douglas Bent  
Jeffrey Benay

**Members present:** Carol McGranaghan, Chair; Carol Irons, Vice-Chair; Doug Bent; Jeff Benay; Patrick Lamphere; Beverly Little-Thunder; Lucy Neel

**Absent:** Hillary Hoffmann, Secretary

**Guests:** Jess Robinson, Vermont State Archaeologist; Aaron Marcus (VT Fish & Wildlife); Joanne Crawford; Rich Holschuh; Xusana Davis; Charles Hohn (VT Fish & Wildlife); Paul Cillo; Stephanie Yu; Lauren Hwang-Finkelman

**1. Introductions**

Commission members and guests introduced themselves.

**2. Changes to the Agenda**

There were no changes to the agenda

**2. Approval of February Meeting Minutes**

Lucy Neel made the motion to approve the November meeting minutes without alteration. Doug Bent seconded the motion. All commissioners voted in the affirmative.

**3. Housekeeping**

Carol McGranaghan asked Jess Robinson what the likelihood would be of having an in-person meeting in April. Jess Robinson stated that due to changing State guidance, and the relaxing of COVID protocols, it would indeed be possible to have an in-person or hybrid meeting in April. Commissioners expressed their support for an in-person meeting. Jess said that he would work to schedule it and inform the Commission of a venue when it was finalized.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**4. Approval of Draft Letter Written to Dave Massell Regarding April Presentation**

Carol McGranaghan asked the Commissioners if they had all read the draft letter she had circulated earlier in the week. All of the Commissioners confirmed that they had read the draft. Carol McGranaghan asked the Commissioners if had any changes they wanted to propose. Jeff Benay asked a question about a statement regarding the media in the letter, and suggested that it

could be made clearer. Carol McGranaghan agreed to reword the final paragraph. She asked for a vote Carol Irons made the motion that Carol McGranaghan make the suggested changes and then send the letter to Professor Massell., Jeff Benay seconded the motion. All of the Commissioners voted in the affirmative.

#### **5. Tax Exempt Land for Abenaki**

Carol McGranaghan stated that the bill exempting certain Abenaki lands from taxation has passed the House and has moved into the Senate for consideration. After being called upon by Carol McGranaghan, Rich Holschuh stated that the proposed legislation regarding sacred sites was read into the record and introduced by Tom Stevens in the House Committee on General, Housing and Military Affairs, but it has not been furthered considered by that committee. Some commissioners asked if they should contact legislators regarding that bill, and it was agreed that being so close cross-over, it would be better to advocate for the bill next year and concentrate their advocacy on the bills that have been taken up this year.

#### **6. List of Resources for Schools to use for Abenaki Curriculum**

Carol Irons stated that there are certain books on the list that she fears portray inaccurate information about the Abenaki and Wabanaki peoples. They discussed several examples and their relative merits and deficiencies.

#### **7. Ban on school Mascots; letter from More Than A Mascot**

The proposed legislation had been introduced in the Senate and, according to Carol McGranaghan's information, was being discussed in Senate committee of jurisdiction that afternoon. Carol McGranaghan stated that she had heard that the Agency of Education was advocating for the mascot issue to be considered hate speech, but Carol McGranaghan stated that she didn't think that was a good idea because it didn't necessarily constitute a ban. She also noted that two school board commissioners who voted in favor of the reinstatement of the racist mascot in Rutland did not get reelected, but she said the ability of schools to continue to adopt or readopt racist or ethnocentric mascots was why a ban is needed. The commissioners agreed that it was positive that the bill still had a chance of passage this year.

#### **8. Funding for the VCNAA**

Carol McGranaghan stated that it was read into the record by Tom Stevens but that it also hadn't been discussed since that time and will likely not make cross-over.

#### **9. Truth and Reconciliation; Updated Bill on Formation of Commission for Truth and Reconciliation - Continued Discussion**

Doug Bent stated that Commissioners in the House Committee on General, Housing and Military Affairs were discussing the state of and make-up of the potential Truth and Reconciliation committee. There were concerns about its cost. Doug Bent said that the discussion included the potential appointment of three full-time commissioners that would be paid the equivalent of half a superior-court judge's salary – or about \$80,000 per year. Carol McGranaghan stated that she also doesn't quite agree with or understand the intent of certain language in the proposed legislation, including the appointment of two members of the Native American community that are not from one of the State-recognized tribes. The Commissioners agreed that it was too late to alter the language, given that it was being discussed in committee as they were speaking.

Commissioners then discussed the likelihood that the bill, if moved out of Committee, would likely also have to move to the Appropriations committee, where it might be able to be changed. They were going to follow its progress.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **10. Aaron Marcus – Presentation of work by ANR**

Aaron Marcus and Charlie Hohn announced that the Agency of Natural Resources had received an EPA wetlands grant. They stated that the grant allows for indigenous involvement, and they wanted to invite the VCNAA and the tribes they represent to offer input if they so choose. Afterward, Aaron Marcus gave a presentation of plants in current settings that were used by Indigenous people and what that may suggest about the persistence of the plants from the indigenous past. There was a discussion afterward about the good work already done and possibilities for the future. The commission thanked Aaron and Charlie.

### **11. Paul Cillo and Stephanie Yu – Public Assets Institute**

Paul Cillo and Stephanie Yu introduced themselves and Introduced the work of the Public Assists Institute. They stated that they are interested in equitable education, progressive tax policy, and citizen participation in State fiscal issues. Paul Cillo stated that they also do a number of presentations of relevant Vermont issues, and lately they have been doing presentation on Vermont education funding. They stated that the nature of their work can be summed up in three words: sound, timely and accessible. They are interested in the perspective of individual Vermonters, including the Abenaki and other Native Americans.

Stephanie Yu then discussed the need for relevant data sources that the Abenaki might think would be important to collect. Paul Cillo stated that their participation in the VCNAA meeting was meant to only be a start of the conversation, and that they wished for the dialogue to continue. The Commissioners thanked them for their presentation and participation.

### **12. Jennifer Byrne – White River Conservation District – Payment for Ecosystem Services – Update**

She briefly summarized the work of the working group on payment for ecosystem services. She stated that currently they are trying to develop community engagement plans. She noted that they looking for input, and she was hopeful that the Commissioners could provide input at some point.

### **13. Permission for Signatures on Letters**

Carol McGranaghan stated that there have been a few instances of letters going out with signatures when the signatories actually did not give permission for their signatures to be added to the letter or document. Carol McGranaghan suggested that when this happens they should make sure to contact the sender and ask for their signatures' removal. Carol McGranaghan also stated that Commissioners be sure to ask permission from all potential signatories before sending or publishing letters/records/publications.

### **14. Abenaki Territorial Map**

Carol McGranaghan stated that given that no formal map has been created between the four State-recognized tribes and the Mohican, she created a map that specified the territories at the

town level based upon the boundaries referenced in the four State-recognized Abenaki applications and a map provided to her by the Mohican. Carol McGranaghan admitted that it was a first attempt and wanted to Commissioners to discuss it. Carol McGranaghan stated that if they agreed with the concept and its rough boundaries, she proposed sending the map to the Chiefs and tribal councils for their consideration. Discussion about the draft map followed. Lucy Neel made a motion directing Carol to send the draft map to the Chiefs so that they and their tribal councils could discuss it. After additional discussion, Lucy withdrew the motion and Beverly Little-Thunder introduced a motion directing Carol to send the draft map to the Chiefs so that they and their tribal councils could discuss it, with a letter from the entire Commission stating why the Commission took on this exercise. Carol Irons seconded the motion. All Commissioners voted in the affirmative.

## **15. Announcements**

Carol Irons wanted to officially state that her Abenaki booklet was not a VCNA A project, and her statement in the preface that it was in cooperation with the Commission was only written to acknowledge the fact that the Commissioners were sent a draft of the book and provided editorial comments prior to publication. She has altered the wording in its second printing.

Doug Bent stated that there is a problem of State-recognized tribes' websites being hacked or spoofed so that people are being led to dubious places, sometimes ones completely antithetical to the Abenaki. Carol McGranaghan stated that she identified a fake Missisquoi site that misdirected searchers to an anti-Abenaki website.

Carol McGranaghan filled out the form asking for a proclamation that May 1<sup>st</sup> - May 8th be considered Abenaki Heritage Week this year.

Lost Nation theatre will be doing a production based around the Abenaki this Spring.

## **16. Public Comment**

None

## **17. Adjournment**

Jeff Benay made a motion to adjourn, Carol Irons seconded the motion. All Commissioners voted in the affirmative. The meeting was adjourned at 3:37 PM.