

VERMONT  
COMMISSION  
ON  
NATIVE  
AMERICAN  
AFFAIRS



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Paul Fassler  
Rich Holschuh  
Eugene Rich  
Jennifer Morton-Dow  
Joanne Crawford



VCNAA June 12, 2019  
Meeting Minutes

**Members Present:** Carol McGranaghan (Chair), Carol Irons (Vice Chair), Joanne Crawford, Paul Fassler, Cheryl Frobose, Rich Holschuh, Jennifer Morton, Eugene Rich

**Members Absent:** Andrea Brett (Secretary)

**Guests:** Jess Robinson (VDHP), Fred Wiseman, Jeff Benay, Ann Lipsett, Rory Cronin, Mac Mattison, Brenda Gagne, Kevin Latuch, Megan Benway, Jonathan Barney, Dakota Tuttle, Jasmyn Hemenway, Sage Gould, Jamesyn Hodgdon, Paisley Forcier

The meeting was brought to order by Carol McGranaghan at 1:12 pm at 1 National Life Drive, Montpelier, in the Montpelier conference room.

### 1. Changes to Agenda

Carol McGranaghan asked that the Circle of Courage performers be moved to the first item on the agenda so that they could return to Swanton in a timely manner.

### 2. Recognition of Guests

The guests were briefly recognized and welcomed to the meeting.

### 3. Circle of Courage performance and discussion

The Circle of Courage is an Abenaki youth organization for kindergartners through six graders that aims to teach generosity, the importance of family, belonging, mastery, independence, and the right for them to speak their mind respectfully. A principal activity of the organization is singing and drumming traditional Abenaki songs in order to carry on these traditions. After an explanation of the Circle of Courage's mission, they children drummed and sang several Abenaki songs for the commissioners and guests. During the final song, commissioners Eugene Rich and Cheryl Frobose participated in drumming with the children.

Following the performance, the commissioners participated in a brief discussion with the children and their mentors. Carol McGranaghan stated that the children should consider themselves lucky because when she grew up she was not afforded the opportunity to learn about her ancestors' traditions. All of the commissioners thanked them for their performance.

Jeff Benay, who facilitated the Circle of Courage's visit, also stressed that needs in the Abenaki community are profound. Suicide prevention is now a top-priority, and he secured a planning grant and subsequent implementation grant to work with the Abenaki community in Grand Isle County (where indigenous suicide is particularly high) to develop strategies to prevent it. It is hoped that it can be broadened into a statewide program.

Jeff Benay also stated that he recently circulated a Native American college scholarship guide to the Abenaki community, and will also facilitate a visit of prospective Abenaki students to UVM later in the summer.

#### **4. Approve May 8, 2019 Minutes**

Joanne Crawford requested that one change be made to May's meeting minutes. Carol McGranaghan moved to adopt the minutes with that amendment. All other commissioners concurred.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

#### **1. Abenaki Cultural Regeneration Project**

Carol Irons stated that the three-day program is set to begin at the end of the month. She stated that it is not yet full, but there are enough attendees to justify it. Mrs. Irons stated that the program will concentrate on plant lore, preservation, history, and spiritual practices.

#### **2. Sites of Cultural Significance Meeting**

Carol McGranaghan stated that their meeting with Andy Carlo of the Forest Stewardship Program went well. They viewed a map of the proposed logging operations indicating areas that were important to Abenakis based upon Andrea Brett's interactions. Carol McGranaghan also asked if Abenaki representatives could go to the area and smudge it at some point. Andy Carlo agreed. Carol McGranaghan stated that currently they are only involved in invasive species removal. Rich Holschuh suggested that they approach the organization's leadership so that some of these consultations could be memorialized in the future.

#### **Tribal Inter-Communication**

Rich Holschuh stated that the VCNAA and Missisquoi Facebook pages are still very active and continue to gain engagement and followers.

#### **3. Permitting and Policy Updates**

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

Rich Holschuh stated that there is nothing new to report this month.

**b. VT Public Utilities Commission – Vermont Yankee**

Rich Holschuh stated that there is nothing new to report this month. He is still awaiting contact from the archaeological consultant to confirm their time frame for investigation.

**c. Marsh-Billings Rockefeller National Park**

Marsh-Billings Rockefeller National Park in Woodstock approached Rich Holschuh about getting Abenaki input on their land use presentations, and how they could be altered to better relate indigenous uses and conceptions of the land.

**d. Legislation**

Rich Holschuh is still discussing with Brian Cina the possibility of introducing a State Religious Freedom Act in the upcoming legislative session. VCNAA is also still awaiting contact from the Department of Health regarding the newly adopted tobacco legislation. The Abenaki also still need to fill a vacancy on the H.3 curriculum committee so that indigenous concerns are represented in school curricula.

**e. UVM Extension Service**

Rich Holschuh recently had a meeting with the UVM extension service regarding diversity. Rich Holschuh proposed that as a land-grant college, UVM should address the overarching question of the original ownership of the land that enabled land-grant colleges. Rich Holschuh stated that they were receptive but that it will probably take a while to develop into something substantive. He stated that it might be turned over to professors and students to research and act upon.

**4. Native American Support for Inmates**

Commissioners still need to follow up on this item.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**1. Medicaid Focus Group and Indigenous Birthing Practices**

Joanne Crawford stated that the Department of Health recently received a grant to work on birthing practices. She is hopeful that some of the grant money can be used to support Abenaki traditional birthing practices, and that eventually a statewide program can be developed as a result of it.

**2. Fred Wiseman – Alnóbiawi and other Updates**

Dr. Wiseman gave a 20-minute presentation about Alnóbiawi and the Abenaki Cultural Heritage Center that is being proposed for the Ethan Allen Homestead barn in Burlington.

A recent architectural assessment determined that the structure could accommodate a finished second story without additional structural supports, meaning that the cost of renovation is approximately half of what they originally estimated. After discussing the proposed layout of the space and the anticipated functions of it, Dr. Wiseman asked if the VCNAA could generate a letter of support for the project that Alnóbiawi and the Ethan Allen Homestead could then use for fundraising, among other things.

A discussion among the commissioners followed thereafter regarding the appropriateness of offering official support for the endeavor. Carol Irons stated the VCNAA should not officially support projects undertaken by entities outside of VCNAA. Paul Fassler also stated that they have refused to draft similar letters in the past because of perceived favoritism or because it is outside of the VCNAA's statutory scope. Dr. Wiseman stated that the VCNAA has in previous years promised similar letters of support. Carol McGranaghan stated that those earlier commissions don't necessarily reflect the current consensus. Other commissioners, including Rich Holschuh and Eugene Rich, stated that they were in favor of a support letter and were surprised that there would be objection. Carol McGranaghan stated that given that the letter will potentially be used for fundraising purposes, there may be conflicts of interest and wanted clarification from Dale Azaria (ACCD counsel) on the legality and/or appropriateness of supporting the center before making a decision. Jess Robinson, as administrative assistant to the VCNAA, stated that he would consult Dale on the issue, but that in his estimation, if the letter did not address fundraising directly and was merely supporting the overall project, there should be no problem.

### **3. Announcements**

- a. Carol McGranaghan stated that she spent a morning recently training docents about the new Abenaki display at the Statehouse.
- b. Carol McGranaghan stated that she has completed a draft letter to the Governor thanking him for supporting Indigenous Peoples' Day legislation and has emailed it to commissioners for editorial comments. Rich Holschuh stated that letters should also be sent to Mitzi Johnson, Tim Ashe, and Debbie Ingraham should also receive letters of thanks.
- c. Carol Irons and Carol McGranaghan attended the screening of *Dawnland* on May 19 at the Capitol City Grange. They answered questions after the event.
- d. Abenaki Heritage weekend is next weekend at the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum.
- e. Paul and Cheryl, whose final terms on the commission will end on August 31<sup>st</sup>, expressed that it was their pleasure and honor to work on the commissioner the previous four years.

**The meeting was adjourned at 3:58 PM.**