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VCNAA February 26th, 2021
Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Carol McGranaghan (Chair), Carol Irons (Vice Chair), Jeff Benay, Doug Bent, Andrea Brett, Lucy Neel

Members Absent: Hillary Hoffman, Beverly Little Thunder, Jennifer Morton

Guests: Rep. Tiffany Bluemle (Chittenden 6-5), Jess Robinson (VDHP)

The meeting was brought to order by Carol McGranaghan at 2:05 pm virtually through the GoToMeeting platform. Following initial greetings, Jess Robinson briefly discussed the processes by which the meeting should be conducted in a virtual environment.

1. Changes to Agenda

Carol McGranaghan stated that before getting to the topic of the special meeting, she briefly wanted to ask if there was a volunteer to join the State's 250th anniversary commission.

2. Recognition of Guests

The guests and commissioners introduced themselves and were welcomed.

New Business

1. Vermont 250th Commission

Carol McGranaghan stated that while the executive order empowering a commission to plan the 250th anniversary of the Revolutionary War does not mention Native Americans and that the event was not necessarily a milestone Natives would wish to celebrate, she appreciated Laura Trieschmann's and Jess Robinson's efforts to assure that a commission seat would be reserved for someone from the VCNAA or someone they designated. Jess Robinson stated that they completely understood the points that Carol McGranaghan raised, but also that some events could be broad and address issues important to Native people, such as the effects of colonization. Dr. Robinson also stated that they wanted to ensure that Native voices were present in the planning conversation, should the VCNAA wish to participate. Jeff Benay stated that while such a position would potentially be a lot of work, it could also be beneficial to the Native community. Given the potential time

commitment, commissioners asked if there was anyone outside of the commission that might have the time and appropriately represent the VCNAA and Native community on the 250 commission. After some discussion, it was suggested that Melody Brook would be a great candidate for the position. Carol Irons made a motion to ask Melody Brook to serve on the commission on behalf of the VCNAA. Carol McGranaghan seconded the motion. All of the other commissioner's present voted in the affirmative.

2. Truth and Reconciliation Legislation Discussion

After a brief introduction to the topic, Carol McGranaghan introduced Representative Tiffany Bluemle (Chittenden 6-5). Rep. Bluemle was attending the meeting as a representative from the House General, Housing, and Military Affairs committee. Although new to the committee this legislative session, Rep. Bluemle characterized the genesis and progression of the proposed Truth and Reconciliation Bill as she understood it. Afterward, Carol Irons stated the while the original resolution to apologize for Vermont's eugenics policies was seen by the Native community as hollow without recognition of the broader impacts of colonization, the Truth and Reconciliation legislation that is now being proposed as a replacement also feels rushed and does not allow enough time to address Native cultural destruction. Andrea Brett agreed with Carol Iron's assessment.

Rep. Bluemle stated that she completely understood their concerns. She also stated that the committee knows that an apology is just the start of the reconciliation process, and that the taskforce was proposed because it would be led by the descendants of communities impacted by eugenics policies and colonization more broadly, and not by the legislative committee itself. She also stated that the taskforce would be charged with articulating some ideas for what truth and reconciliation would look like in the future. The Truth and Reconciliation taskforce was not meant to be an end in itself.

Jeff Benay stated that he appreciated the House General, Housing, and Military Affairs Committee's work on this issue. He also stated that after speaking with Representative Tom Stevens, the chair of the House General, Housing and Military Affairs committee, he was under the impression that Rep. Stevens was under some pressure to pass some version of this legislation this year. He did not understand where this pressure might be coming from, however, because the VCNAA had not been aware of the details of the legislation until very recently, and the Missisquoi tribal council, representing the large Missisquoi Native community, did not know about it at all until late the previous week.

After additional discussion, Doug Bent made a motion to request that the House General, Housing, and Military Affairs committee table the Truth and Reconciliation legislation this year until the Abenaki can be educated about the issue and come to an internal consensus about the legislation and who may be appropriate to represent them on the taskforce. Carol Irons seconded the motion. All others voted in the affirmative.

Doug Bent also made a motion to form a sub-committee made up of representatives of the four recognized tribes and unaffiliated Natives. The sub-committee would be charged

with addressing the Truth and Reconciliation issue. After a brief discussion. Doug Bent was chosen to represent the Koasek, Jeff Benay was chosen to represent the Missisquoi, Melody Brook would be asked to represent the El Nu, Lucy Neel would represent the Nulhegan, and Andrea Brett would represent unaffiliated Native people. Lucy Neel made a motion to accept the creation of the sub-committee and its members. Doug Bent seconded. All other commissioners present voted in the affirmative.

Lucy Neel made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Doug Bent seconded the motion. All commissioners present voted in the affirmative.

The meeting was adjourned 4:31 PM.