

VERMONT  
COMMISSION  
ON  
NATIVE  
AMERICAN  
AFFAIRS



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VCNAA October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020  
Meeting Minutes

**Members Present:** Carol McGranaghan (Chair), Carol Irons (Vice Chair), Andrea Brett (Secretary), Beverly Little Thunder

**Members Absent:** Jennifer Morton

**Guests: Rep.** Brian Cina (Chittenden 6-4), Jess Robinson (VDHP), Joanne Crawford

The meeting was brought to order by Carol McGranaghan at 1:18 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. Also, because there were not enough commissioners attending the meeting to constitute a quorum, Jess reminded the commission that no formal votes could be taken.

### 1. Changes to Agenda

Carol McGranaghan stated that because Hillary Hoffman could not attend the meeting, the reparations discussion on the agenda would have to be postponed until the next meeting.

### 2. Recognition of Guests

The guests and commissioners introduced themselves and were welcomed.

### 3. Approve March 11, 2020 Minutes

Because there was not a quorum, Carol McGranaghan stated that voting to accept the minutes would have to be postponed until the next meeting.

## OLD BUSINESS

### 1. Commission Policies Discussion

Carol Irons stated that given that the Commission has agreed to put the adoption of by-laws aside, she studied previous years' meeting minutes and other notes in order to get a sense of some overriding philosophies that in her opinion had guided Commission since its formation. She listed them as follows:

1. The Chair will be a person of Indigenous heritage in recognition of the fact that the land of Vermont is Abenaki country. This is also to ensure that Commission activities and projects retain an Indigenous focus rather than Euroamerican.
2. The Commission will not officially endorse or support, by letter or funds, any group or project that is not a specifically Commission project in order to retain public neutrality.
3. It is expected that if a Commission decision is being requested that directly favors one group/tribe/affiliation, and that a Commission member is also a member of the favored group, this be recognized as a conflict of interest and the member recuse himself/herself.

Although she understood that the commission could not vote on ratifying these items as guiding principles for the Commission going forward this month, she asked the Commissioners to consider these items for the following meeting, and was interested in any comments or criticisms they might have.

## **2. New Appointment Updates**

Commissioners asked Jess Robinson to provide a brief update on the status of commission openings. Dr. Robinson stated that he had processed one application and submitted it for consideration to the Governor's office. Carol McGranaghan stated that Chief Menard of the Missisquoi informed her that he was recommending two people for appointment to the Commission, and that if they had not yet submitted their applications, they would do so imminently.

## **3. Bill H. 880 Update**

Representative Brian Cina (Chittenden 6-4) joined the meeting and stated that H. 880 - An Act Related to Abenaki Place Names on State Park Signs – was signed by the Governor into law. He stated that from his perspective, this was an enormous accomplishment for the Commission and the Abenaki. He reminded the Commission that the bill requires that the VCNAA, working with the tribes, experts, and other stakeholders, submit to the Agency of Natural Resources a definitive place name list with agreed upon spellings by March 15, 2021.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **1. Legislative Bills Commission to Introduce Next Session**

Representative Brian Cina (Chittenden 6-4) stated that he has submitted a placeholder for possible Truth and Reconciliation commission land religious freedom legislation, but the Commission and tribes are not obligated to anything. Carol McGranaghan stated that she would like to reach out to the chiefs as the chair of the VCNAA and try and work with them to put forth a united front in any legislation that gets introduced. She also stated that

she stated that she wanted to assure the chiefs that the VCNAA is not adversarial but rather is actively working for the tribes and other indigenous Vermonters.

## **2. Announcements**

- a) Carol McGranaghan stated that prior to signing the bill, the Governor's office reached out regarding some minor questions and then offered help in the future should the Commission need it.
- b) Carol McGranaghan stated that WCAX is conducting an interview with her regarding H. 880 the day after the meeting. She asked if any other commissioner wished to attend and/or also be interviewed. She asked them to reply to her the evening of the meeting.
- c) Regarding potential projects for the Commission to work on in 2021, several commissioners expressed their desire to work toward the inclusion of a curriculum on indigenous Vermonters in K-12 schools in 2021.
- d) Carol McGranaghan stated that despite the pandemic restrictions, the Indigenous Peoples' Day celebration she attended on Monday was excellent.
- e) Carol McGranaghan stated that Chief Menard of the Missisquoi carved an Abenaki-styled totem pole, which was installed in Swanton during Indigenous Peoples' Day.

**The meeting was adjourned 2:55 PM.**