

VERMONT
COMMISSION
ON
NATIVE
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AFFAIRS



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Carol Irons, Vice Chair
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VCNAA September 9th, 2020
Meeting Minutes

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

Members Absent: Jennifer Morton

Guests: Rep. Brian Cina (Chittenden 6-4), Paul Fassler, Jess Robinson (VDHP), Auburn Watersong

The meeting was brought to order by Carol McGranaghan at 1:11 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 representatives from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) and the Vermont Land Trust (VLT) were not able to attend the meeting and were removed from the schedule. Carol McGranaghan also stated that Rep. Brian Cina would be joining the meeting at 2:45 and the commissioners agreed to alter the meeting as need to accommodate his schedule.

2. Recognition of Guests

The guests and commissioners introduced themselves and were welcomed.

3. Approve March 11, 2020 Minutes

Beverly Little Thunder moved to accept the August meeting minutes without change. Carol Irons seconded the motion. All other commissioners voted in the affirmative.

4. Election of Officers

The commissioners agreed to postpone the election of officers until the October meeting. It was hoped that perhaps additional commissioners would be appointed by that date.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Discuss Draft By-Laws

Jess Robinson informed the commission that Max Krieger would not be able to attend the meeting. Dr. Robinson stated that he was informed by Mr. Krieger that he had submitted an inquiry to the administration about commission by-laws but had yet to receive a response.

2. Discussion of Alternatives to By-Laws

Hillary Hoffman summarized her research on the use and content of by-laws by executive commissions across the country. She stated that virtually none of the groups she examined utilized by-laws as far as she could discern through publicly available information. Instead, she stated that most displayed a succinct mission statement on their website and some websites also contained a link to their enabling statute where applicable. Several commissioners noted that the VCNAA website currently contains a link to the statute, but that the VCNAA has no mission statement.

The commissioners discussed the possibility of drafting a set of guiding principles or policies that could be displayed on the website, understanding that they had to comport with the VCNAA enabling statute. Beverly Little Thunder suggested that the commission put aside the discussion of the adoption of by-laws in favor of drafting a conflict of interest statement and potentially guiding principles to be placed on the VCNAA website. Carol McGranaghan offered to prepare a draft for consideration at a later meeting.

3. Commission 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. He was also told to expect another application but had yet to receive it. Dr. Robinson stated that even assuming the Governor appoints the recent applicant, there are still several openings on the commission.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Legislative Bills Commission to Introduce Next Session

Representative Brian Cina (Chittenden 6-4) joined the meeting to discuss pending and future legislation important to the VCNAA and the tribes they represent. Rep. Cina noted that H. 880 – An Act Related to Abenaki Place Names of State Park Signs – had passed the Senate after some subtle changes in the language of the legislation. The bill requires that the VCNAA (with input of the tribes and other stakeholders) put together a definitive list of place names and correct spellings by March 2021. He was cautiously optimistic that the Governor would sign the bill.

Given that the 2021 legislative session is the first in the biennium, the commissioners acknowledged that legislation the VCNAA sponsored or endorsed in the previous session

would have to get reintroduced. Andrea Brett suggested that there would likely not be a lot of room to consider legislation not related to the pandemic or financial concerns, but that they should still try to proceed. Rep. Cina suggested that the proposed religious freedom legislation could be reworked and reworded so that it is more comprehensive but not conceptually different.

With regard to the potential legislative apology for eugenics and other historic wrongs, Rep. Cina stated that the emerging consensus is that there should be a commission of some kind that holistically explores the issue and also the wrongs perpetrated against other minority and underrepresented groups. Hillary Hoffman volunteered to look at Maine's truth and reconciliation commission and related documents to see if and how such an entity could be tailored to Vermont.

2. Announcements

- a) Andrea Brett recently spoke with a representative from the Burlington Parks and Recreation office. The representative seeking input on the sculpture of Greylock in the city's Battery Park. She stated that the city has \$15,000 for restoration and documentation, but that alone is not enough money to restore or replace the sculpture. The representative suggested that they could do a three-dimensional scan of the sculpture to preserve it digitally, or potentially use the money for as a seed for a new sculpture in the park. Andrea stated that if the commissioners had any ideas, Burlington would be happy to entertain them.
- b) Beverly Little Thunder stated that despite the historic reluctance of Native people to participate in the Census, she encouraged all Native people in Vermont to participate in the 2020 Census so that they could be adequately counted and represented.

Carol Irons made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Beverly Little Thunder seconded the motion. All commissioners voted in the affirmative.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 PM.