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ON  
NATIVE  
AMERICAN  
AFFAIRS



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VCNAA November 13, 2019  
Meeting Minutes

**Members Present:** Carol McGranaghan (Chair), Carol Irons (Vice Chair), Joanne Crawford, Rich Holschuh, Beverly Little Thunder, Jennifer Morton

**Members Absent:** Eugene Rich, Andrea Brett, Hillary Hoffmann

**Guests:** Jess Robinson (VDHP), Rep. Brian Cina (Chittenden 6-4), Dale Azaria (Department of Housing and Community Development), Dan O'Neil (Ethan Allen Homestead), Kris Smith (Montana State University), Xusana Davis (VT Director of Racial Equity)

The meeting was brought to order by Carol McGranaghan at 1:09 pm at 1 National Life Drive, Montpelier, in the Montpelier conference room.

### 1. Changes to Agenda

There were no changes to the agenda.

### 2. Recognition of Guests

The guests and commissioners introduced themselves and were welcomed.

### 3. Approve June 12, 2019 Minutes

The commissioners agreed to accept the October minutes as written by consensus.

### 4. Code of Ethics, Conflict of Interest, General Information for Commission Members

Dale Azaria, council to VCNAA, came to the commission to provide information on the ethical responsibilities of the commissioners, potential conflicts of interests and their disclosures, and other general information about their positions and the enabling statute. Several commissioners asked Mrs. Azaria about particular aspects of meetings, and then thanked her for her information.

## OLD BUSINESS

### 1. Cultural Regeneration Project

The cultural regeneration project is no longer associated with the VCNAA. Carol Irons is trying to recruit more children to participate in the programs, but she is unsure how to

connect with them and fears that youth are generally not as interested in cultural revitalization as in years past.

## **2. Tribal Inter-Communication**

Rich Holschuh stated that the VCNAA Facebook page continues to gain followers and activity. Nearly 1000 people like the page, and it is generating a good deal of interest.

## **3. Permitting and Legislative updates with Rich Holschuh and Representative Brian Cina (Chittenden 6-4)**

Rich Holschuh briefly stated that there was no new news to report on Connecticut River dam relicensing or Vermont Yankee decommissioning. He then turned the meeting over to Rep. Brian Cina to summarize the current state of the legislation he has sponsored on behalf of the VCNAA and tribes.

Rep. Brian Cina stated that he asked the legislative council to draft three separate pieces of legislation: a bill pertaining to religious freedom, a bill addressing Abenaki language inclusion on official Vermont signage, and a bill that addresses the tax-free status of land considered spiritually important by the Abenaki. He then suggested that perhaps they should think about withdrawing the bill dealing with tax exempt lands and concentrate on the other two.

Rich Holschuh then stated that in his opinion it should always be kept in mind that the Abenaki people have always been on the land and that they should not ultimately be concerned with what the state will accept, but rather how those principles, even though it must be recognized that only will take small, iterative steps. He also stated that there is a need to teach people about indigenous history and lifeways in order to generate buy-in by the legislature and general public.

Carol McGranaghan was concerned that by withdrawing the tax-exempt status bill, people will not be exposed to the issue. She realized that it was unlikely to pass in the current biennium, but the bill will at least raise consciousness about the issue among legislators. Rep. Brian Cina understood that concern and stated that he will see what the legislation looks like as written and then discuss it again with the VCNAA at the next meeting.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **1. Dan O'Neil – Ethan Allen Homestead and Alnôbaiwi Updates**

Dan O'Neil, director of the Ethan Allen Homestead, came to the commission to share the museum's progress and partnership with Alnôbaiwi. He stated that the first year of the partnership was fairly successful. The assessments of interior, second-floor modifications have been completed and are significantly less expensive than first thought. He also

stated that Abenaki Heritage Week was very successful, and they are already planning for next year's events.

Mr. O'Neil stated that the Ethan Allen Museum board have started discussions with Alnôbaiwi about how their partnership will be memorialized and how the facilities will be maintained and funded, etc. He is hoping for a long-term relationship with coequal responsibility for the building.

## **2. Alnôbaiwi Updates**

Joanne Crawford stated from her perspective the partnership has been very successful. She was very moved by the programming and spirit of Alnôbaiwi this year and also hopes that the partnership can continue in the future.

## **3. Abenaki Land Acknowledgement – Middlebury College**

Kris Smith of Montana State University came to the commission to inquire about the VCNAA's opinion on land acknowledgements at the beginning of presentations. Her interest was spurned after participating in a recent conference at Middlebury College. Carol McGranaghan stated that in her opinion it was not tokenism to acknowledge that the land was originally occupied by the Abenaki and other indigenous peoples. Rather, she stated that it was a succinct form of education about the issue. Joanne Crawford agreed and stated that education leads to recognition.

After further discussion of the issue, VCNAA agreed to form a committee to work on the language that they would like used by people interested in land acknowledgement. Jennifer Morton-Dow, Beverly Little Thunder, and Carol Irons were appointed to that committee.

## **4. Lend Vermont Program Letter**

Joanne Crawford and Jennifer Morton-Dow requested that VCNAA support in writing a federal grant for the Vermont Lend Program to hire a native person to work with Native people on substance abuse, health and wellness. After some discussion, the commissioners realized that they could not supply to the letter within the time frame required by the grant deadline.

## **5. Announcements**

- a. Rich Holschuh stated Chief Roger Longtoe had a hip replacement recently, but he is doing well.
- b. Joanne Crawford stated that an election for a chief of the Missisquoi band will take place the following week.

- c. Rich Holschuh stated that seniors in the University of Vermont's Rubenstein school will be presenting their findings about the sale of Federal Land grants to benefit the University of Vermont.

**The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 PM.**