

Minutes
February 25, 2008

*Vermont Commission
On
Native American Affairs*

Mark Mitchell, Chairman
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Commission Members:

Jeanne A. Brink
Timothy de la Bruere
Hilary Casillas
Judy Dow
Charlene R. McManis
Donald W. Stevens

Members Present: Mark Mitchell, Chairman; Tim de la Bruere, Charlene McManis, Don Stevens, Judy Dow, Jeanne Brink

Staff: Diane McInerney, Executive Assistance DHP

Guests: John Moody; Fred Wiseman; Jesse Larocque, Abenaki; Nancy Millet, Cowasuck Abenaki Nation; Roger Longtoe Sheehan, El-Nu; Lacy Longtoe Sheehan, El-Nu; Phyllis Donovan; Douglas Lloyd Buchholz; Doris Seale, Burlington; Lynn Menard-Mathieson; Dave Mathieson; James J. LaFountain; Janet R. LaFountain; Paul W. Pouliot; Denise Shehesan; Diane Mueller; Todd Hebert; Richard Bernier; Charles Delaney-Megeso; Chinka Whitekiller; Nancy Gallagher; Mary L. Collins; Skip Bernier

This meeting was brought to order by the Chairman, Mark Mitchell, at 10:00 a.m. in the Secretary of State Board Room, Floor 2, National Life Building; Montpelier, Vermont.

Minutes from January 24, 2008

Minutes from the January meeting were not reviewed at this meeting.

1. Review of Proposed Amendment for S117 (Bill 226607-01-08-705)

Mark began the meeting by presenting a copy of the Bill 226607-01-08-705 to all individuals present at the meeting, and asked Charlene to share her perspective of testimony presented to the legislature on February 15, 2008 at the state house. Charlene felt there were two main questions of interest: Who should be recognized in the state of Vermont as indigenous people, and should the Commission or the legislature make that determination. Charlene felt there was an atmosphere of emotion, fear, apprehension and bitterness surrounding the issues. She felt there was a lack of community. Charlene expressed her vision of "Indian Country" and believes that all Native American's as well as Abenaki People belong to Indian County.

Charlene said that she can only offer her suggestion: "Listening much, and saying little" might be a good way to start. From this point one can "speak from the heart."

Mark, as Chair, encouraged anyone in Vermont Indian Country to write their own amendment, get it sponsored and introduced to the legislature if they **do not** agree with the Commission's proposed introduced amendment. Mark found it disturbing that the introduced amendment the Commission has been working on for the past two years has been re-written by someone outside the Commission. Mark said that the discussion at this meeting would focus only on the introduced amendment submitted by Senator Vincent Illuzzi. While the Commission believes they should be vested with the authority for determination, as a Commission they have chosen to travel the path of the bill as it has been introduced.

Tim moved to support the amended draft, now Bill 226607-01-08-705, with changes by Senator Illuzzi, and Jeanne seconded. A discussion ensued. Commission members all felt that genealogy information should be case sensitive and not on public record.

Mark noted that there was a motion on the table. Judy said that she felt this was a fair and transparent process for all Abenaki People to follow. Judy moved to vote in support of Bill 226607-01-08-705 as amended and Jeanne seconded. There was Commission consensus to approve the bill as introduced.

Judy wrote a short paragraph stating the Commissions intentions and feelings concerning the Bill to be presented to Senator Illuzzi, and requested Commission approval. The Commission agreed that there would be no re-drafts of the proposed Bill. With Commission consensus, all members signed the document in a unified public statement.

2. New Business

Mark informed the Commission that he would not be able to attend the March meetings scheduled for the 13th and the 27th. At this time he requested that Tim de la Bruere act as co-chairman and conduct the meetings. Judy moved to accept Tim as acting co-chair to all meetings in Marks absence and Jeanne seconded. Charlene moved to vote and Judy seconded. There was Commission consensus that Tim act as the co-chair for these meetings and all future meetings when Mark is not present. Judy discussed agenda items for the meetings and felt that the public needs information concerning Indian Law by a Native Lawyer. There will be an update on the Intervale, a discussion on education, and new bylaws created.

Mark presented a draft of talking points on S117 that he felt should be discussed and agreed upon by Commission members. These talking points will be a way for members to reach out with information to government bodies, and the public, that is accurate and consistent. Each meeting will have a set of talking points about information disseminated and agreed upon at that meeting. The points will help members inform people in their jurisdiction about Commission policies that affect them. Tim felt that the talking points could also be available on the VCNA website. Mark asked the Commission to review the talking points presented for S117 for approval. Tim moved to approve the talking points on S117 and Charlene seconded. It was suggested that at the next meeting bylaws should be created for the talking points and for a co-chairman to be elected. Jeanne moved for the vote and Judy seconded. There was Commission consensus on approval of the talking points for S117.

3. Public Comment

Mark opened the meeting for public discussion and comments. All guests were given the time to speak about their issues and concerns regarding the current amendment to S117.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Diane McNerney (say-air-kee-wayn-chukws)