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NATIVE
AMERICAN
AFFAIRS



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VCNAA February 20, 2019
Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Carol McGranaghan (Chair), Carol Irons (Vice Chair), Rich Holschuh, Eugene Rich, Andrea Brett (Secretary), Jennifer Morton

Members Absent: Paul Fassler, Cheryl Frobose

Guests: Jess Robinson (VDHP), Joanne Crawford (Alnóbiawi), Lane Fury, Fred Wiseman (Alnóbiawi), Nicole Lucas (VT Dept. of Health), Dan O'Neil (Ethan Allen Homestead), Kristina Kiarsis (VT Dept. of Health), Kerry Wood (Alnóbiawi), Rep. Brian Cina (Chittenden 6-4)

The meeting was brought to order by Carol McGranaghan at 1:05 pm at 1 National Life Drive, Montpelier, in the Montpelier conference room.

1. Changes to Agenda

Commissioners agreed to accommodate Rep. Brian Cina whenever he entered the meeting due to his busy legislative schedule for the day.

2. Approve November 14, 2018 Minutes

Rich Holschuh moved to adopt the minutes as written. Andrea Brett seconded the motion. All other commissioners concurred.

3. Recognition of Guests

Carol McGranaghan (Chair) requested that all the commissioners and guests introduce themselves. Afterward, all the guests were welcomed to the meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Appointment Process for Commission

Carol McGranaghan and Carol Irons contacted Sen. Joe Benning (Caledonia) to express her concern regarding the VCNAA appointment process over the previous two years. He expressed to her that he would look into the matter and check in with the Office of Boards and Commissions.

2. Abenaki Cultural Regeneration Project

Carol Irons stated that they were not awarded a Lake Champlain Basin Program grant, but Mrs. Irons and colleagues are now applying to a larger nationwide granting agency and are hopeful that they will be successful. Her tentative plan is to host workshops on June 21 – 23 and August 17 – 18 at the Northwoods Stewardship Center. The topics of the workshops are yet to be determined and will be based primarily on the ages of the enrollees.

3. Tribal Inter-Communication

Eugene stated that inter-tribal communication continues to be very good; particularly among and between the chiefs. As an example, Mr. Rich recently attended the Nulhegan snowsnake games. Mr. Rich also reiterated that Facebook continues to be a wonderful tool for announcements and messages within and between tribes and the individuals within them.

4. Representative Brian Cina (Chittenden 6-4)

Rep. Brian Cina gave a short summary of the legislation he has sponsored or co-sponsored on behalf of VCNAA and the tribes it represents, including H.3 (An act relating to ethnic and social equity studies standards for public schools), H. 119 (An act relating to Indigenous Peoples' Day), and H. 178 (An act relating to exempting real property associated with a State-recognized Indian tribe from property taxation), and H. 212 (An act relating to creating the Office of Native American Affairs). He stated that barring any unforeseen circumstances, H. 3 would pass, and that H. 119 and H. 178 had far more co-sponsors than when they were originally introduced during the last biennium. He suggested that VCNAA's constituents contact the appropriate committee members and their own representatives to let them know they support the legislation.

5. Status Report

a. CT River Hydro Re-Licensing

Rich Holschuh stated that there is nothing new to report this month.

b. VT Public Utilities Commission – Vermont Yankee

Rich Holschuh stated the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant has been officially purchased by the Northstar group for decommissioning. Per the request of the El Nu and Missisquoi tribes, Northstar has hired Goodwin and Associates to conduct an archaeological investigation on portions of the property during the upcoming field season. Mr. Holschuh stated that there has been agreement among all of the parties thus far.

c. Statehouse Display

Carol McGranaghan stated that it was exactly one year ago that she and Melody Brook first met with David Schütz (Statehouse curator) to discuss the possibility of an exhibit of Abenaki materials at the statehouse. Despite a lot of difficulties, Mrs. McGranaghan stated that she was pleased that there was finally a plan, a designated location within the statehouse, and a date for the exhibit (May 1st). Fred Wiseman stated that he was asked to write the text for the exhibit, and that the exhibit panels and case are being designed by Shadows and Light, Inc.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Vermont Department of Health Presentation

Nicole Lucas and Kristina Kiarsis from the Vermont Department of Health came to VCNAA to discuss the possibility of working with them and the tribes they represent to develop enduring systems of health in their communities related to diabetes maintenance and tobacco cessation (excluding its use for ceremonial purposes). The department was the recipient of a large grant to address these issues among minority and rural communities and it was suggested to Nicole Lucas that the Abenaki might be an important population with whom to work. While they stressed that the presentation is introductory, the commissioners stated that they would start announcing the potential collaboration on their social media platforms and their meetings and remain open to the opportunity to collaborate.

2. A Screening of Dawnland

Lane Fury came to the commission to propose that she sponsor a screening of Dawnland in the Barre/Montpelier area and use it as a vehicle for VCNAA and/or tribal members to talk with the attendees. The money charged for the event would go to the Abenaki Cultural Regeneration Project. The commission members discussed it and decided that it was a wonderful initiative to support and would decide the detailed logistics in the days that followed.

3. Native American Support for Inmates

An inmate wrote a letter to VCNAA wondering how he might access and engage in Native American (Abenaki) spiritual practices while in prison. Carol McGranaghan stated that she did not really have an answer to that question. Jennifer Morton stated that she would be willing to work with the inmates but that the practices and how they might be implemented in a prison setting needed to be made available to her in a form she could use. The commissioners stated that they would put out a call on social media and within their tribes to see if there were any volunteers that could assist in this endeavor.

4. Racial Equity Panel and VT 2020 Centennial Suffrage Movement Celebration

Andrea Brett was appointed to the State's Racial Equality Panel and was subsequently made chair. She stated that the panel was close to choosing an executive director and presenting their choice to the Governor for his concurrence. She stated that she was also working with the VT Centennial 2020 Suffrage Movement Celebration and was looking for input on the history of the suffrage movement and for event ideas.

5. Abenaki License Plate

Eugene Rich stated that due to the amount of proposed legislation they were involved with this year, he was not going to pursue the idea of an Abenaki license plate (with the proceeds going to Abenaki college scholarships) this biennium. Nevertheless, he did not want to abandon the idea and is planning to pursue it again in the future.

6. Alnóbiawi

Fred Wiseman gave a brief overview of the work he had done over the previous year to research or advance topics and initiatives related to the Abenaki. Afterward, Dr. Wiseman, Joanne Crawford, Kerry Wood, and Dan O'Neil gave a summary of the new organization they had co-founded (with others), Alnóbiawi ("The Abenaki Way"). Alnóbiawi is non-tribal Abenaki organization that seeks to promote indigenous knowledge and practices among Native Americans (Abenaki and non-Abenaki). Their aspiration is to be open and collaborative, and sponsor and/or host events throughout the year.

Their principal effort thus far has been working with Dan O'Neil from the Ethan Allen Homestead to establish an indigenous heritage center on the Homestead grounds. Mr. O'Neil has approached his board of directors and they have approved the concept of transforming the second story of a barn on the property into the heritage center. Architectural plans are currently being drawn. The establishment of the center is contingent on securing or raising the necessary funds, but the group and the homestead are hopeful that the center will ultimately come to pass.

Joanne Crawford noted that anyone wishing to apply to be a member of Alnóbiawi, interested in learning more about the organization, or wanting to receive meeting minutes or agendas should contact her at: joannecrawford66@gmail.com.

7. Public Comment

After some discussion about the potential ironies of hosting an indigenous center at a place whose central mission is related to Ethan Allen (who had very problematic relationships with Native Americans), Jess Robinson stated that while that is certainly true, the grounds of the homestead were intensely occupied by Native Americans for at least two millennia prior Ethan Allen's settlement, and in that sense is entirely appropriate.

8. Announcements

DRAFT

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There were no announcements.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:57 PM.