



**VCNAA September 5, 2018
Meeting Minutes**

**VERMONT
COMMISSION
ON
NATIVE
AMERICAN
AFFAIRS**



vcnaa.vermont.gov

COMMISSION
Carol McGranaghan, Vice Chair
Andrea Brett, Secretary
Carol Irons
Cheryl O'Neil
Paul Fassler
Rich Holschuh
Eugene Rich
Jennifer Morton-Dow

Members Present: Carol McGranaghan, Vice Chair, Carol Irons, Paul Fassler, Rich Holschuh, Cheryl O'Neil, Eugene Rich, Jennifer Morton

Members Absent: Andrea Brett

Guests: Brooke Hadley, Dartmouth Native American Program; John Moody; Jess Robinson, VDHP.

The meeting was brought to order by Carol McGranaghan at 1:07 pm at 1 National Life Drive, Montpelier, in the Montpelier conference room.

1. Changes to Agenda

Because the commissioners had not yet received their formal appointments or reappointments to the commission at the time of the meeting, it was agreed to postpone the election of officers until the following meeting. Carol McGranaghan also suggested that they discuss drafting a letter to the Governor's office of Boards, Commissions and Public Service expressing their concerns about the delay as an order of business.

2. Approve June 13, 2018 Minutes

The commission agreed to approve the previous meeting's minutes as written by consensus.

3. Recognition of Guests

All of the commissioners and guests to the meeting introduced themselves and the guests were welcomed by the commission.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Action Plan

a. Abenaki Cultural Regeneration Project

Carol Irons reported that some the programs they planned to host in August took place and that there was a good discussion among the attendees about the project and its future. Mrs. Irons also stated that the host venue, the Northwoods Stewardship Center, is glad to be a project partner and has stated that they would be happy to facilitate grants to the program as a 501C3 non-profit organization.

b. Tribal Inter-Communication

Eugene Rich stated that Vermont inter-tribal communication continues to be a challenge but that the Abenaki Nation of Missisquoi Facebook page has been gaining users and interaction steadily among members of the Missisquoi tribe and the interested public.

c. Indigenous People's Day – New initiatives, Planning an Observance, Other localities, and Strategies for the next legislative session.

Rich Holschuh stated that the town of Hartford is considering the recognition of Indigenous People's Day. In the past year, however VCNA's larger efforts in the Vermont Legislature failed to win approval in the last session. As such, commissioners suggested that they make a concerted effort to recruit legislators in both chambers and other allies in order to get the legislation passed this year.

Mr. Holschuh then noted that during the previous year, the commission pursued four separate initiatives in the legislature and that this likely diluted their overall impact among the legislators. The commissioners agreed to focus on the passage of Indigenous People's Day and on an Abenaki themed license plate (with the proceeds funding academic scholarships) as the two priorities to pursue for the 2018/2019 legislative session.

d. Elected Official

Rich Holschuh summarized the idea, raised in the previous year, of pursuing a formal, non-voting official who would work in the statehouse on behalf of the Abenaki. The idea was based upon similar officials in the Maine legislature that work on behalf of the Federally-recognized tribes in that state. Paul Fassler noted that this initiative was pursued by Nulhegan chief Don Stevens. He suggested that while they should support him, the commission should concentrate on the other priorities they had previously discussed in the upcoming year. All of the commissioners were in agreement.

2. Guest Presentations

Due to some extra time in the schedule, Carol McGranaghan suggested that the guests give their presentations. The commissioners and guests agreed.

a. Brooke Hadley, Dartmouth College Native American coordinator, introduced herself to the commission. Ms. Hadley stated that she was a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, and that in her role she thought it she would learn about Native groups in Vermont. Beyond that, she was content to simply listen to the proceedings.

b. Peter Forbes, then introduced himself, and stated that he wished to inform the commission about his organization Conservation Unbound. They seek to develop agreements between landowners, stewards, and Native communities for Native access to conservation lands for non-destructive ceremonial and plant gathering purposes. Many Maine conservation groups have developed agreements with Native American groups through his organization. He was hopeful that he could work with Native groups in Vermont in the future.

3. Status Report

a. CT River Hydro Re-Licensing

Rich Holschuh stated that while there were no major announcements, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) some time ago informed the applicant that they had to complete all of their historic preservation obligations and rejected the applicant's request to waive additional historic preservation studies.

b. VT Public Utilities Commission – Vermont Yankee

Rich Holschuh stated that the Vermont Public Utility Commission (PUC) has tabled all actions related to Vermont Yankee until the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has made their decision about the Northstar purchase.

4. New Hampshire and Vermont Joint Commission meeting & Agenda

The commission agreed to contact the New Hampshire Native Affairs commission to schedule their next joint meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Goals and New Directions Follow-Up

a. Jennifer Morton stated that she was working on collecting and cataloging Native birth stories as part of a project she initiated with Melody Brook. She needed to connect with Melody to see where this project stands or if it should be continued now that Mrs. Brook has moved out of state.

b. Cultural Heritage Center

Carol McGranaghan stated that while the idea of an Abenaki cultural heritage center was great in principle, there was no funding available or foreseeable, no available infrastructure, and no ready means to handle the logistics involved with a center. Paul Fassler suggested that instead of working immediately for a brick-and-mortar space, the initial goal should be to collect, catalog, and inventory oral, digital, photographic, and artifactual archives for a center should it become possible in the future. Carol Irons stated that there is no harm talking about it as an aspirational goal, but in the meantime, collecting resources is a good idea.

2. Commission Appointments & Re-Appointment Process

Carol McGranaghan stated that the reappointment process broke down this year and that this was the second year in a row that there have been problems. Mrs. McGranaghan proposed that she draft a letter to the Governor's Commission on Boards, Commissions, and Public Service requesting that the logistics surrounding the process of reappointment, while still being solely at the Governor's discretion, be handled principally by the Division for Historic Preservation, as it states in statute.

3. Public Comment and Announcements

Various announcements were made during the public comment period.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:39 PM.