



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
**EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF HOUSING &
LIVABLE COMMUNITIES
COMMISSION ON INDIAN AFFAIRS**

Maura T. Healey, Governor ♦ Kimberley Driscoll, Lieutenant Governor
Edward M. Augustus, Jr., Secretary ♦ John Peters, Jr., Executive Director

**MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE
COMMISSION ON INDIAN AFFAIRS**

Wednesday, August 9, 2023 6:00 PM

Zoom was facilitated by Commissioner Wagner

Commissioners Present: Rhonda Anderson, Tashanna Carter, Gail Hill, Troy Phillips, Chairman; and Mike Wagner.

Commissioners Absent: Aaron Gonzales.

Staff: John “Jim” Peters, Executive Director; and Burne Stanley, part-time Administrative Assistant.

Community Members & Other Attendees (names from list of zoom participants): Chief Lena 2Feathers, Courtney Akbar, Rachel Bayliss, Ella Blackowl, Junise Bliss, Cheryl Cromwell, DPH; Tracy Eastman, Melissa, Ferretti, Chairwoman, Herring Pond Wampanoag Tribe; Candia Flynn, Penny Gamble-Williams, Gina Jackson, Bishop Jordan, Nehemiah Jordan, Alexis Moreis, Lamar Moreis, Ellie Page, Jean-Luc Pierite, NAICOB; Patricia Rocker, Chief Duane Yellow Feather Shepard, Peter Silva, Yvette Turner, Akuahah Wheaton, Love Williams, and Ray Williams.

Names or phone numbers from the list of zoom participants whose last names were not included: (10) Cassie, Cora NITHPO, Glenda, iPad(2), iPhone, Marcus, Mattakeeset, Mitchell, Skywatcher, and Tonia.

Comm. Phillips called the meeting to order at 6:03 PM. He did a roll call of the Commissioners all of whom were present except Comm. Gonzales; and then the two staff, both of whom were present. Comm. Phillips mentioned that Comm. Wagner will be the host of the meeting.

Comm. Wagner opened discussion by explaining that the meeting has a limited purpose. It is to get updated on what the Commission is attempting to do to help the

tribes and groups establish a relationship with the Commonwealth. A draft document entitled: *Information to Document Status of Native American Communities*" was circulated to the communities several days prior to the meeting.

Jim reported that shortly after Burne sent out the document, he received a few responses. He said that in the near future, meetings will be scheduled with individual groups to talk about what documents they have, what they are looking for in a relationship with the state, etc. Ideally, we would like to receive comments on the type of information each group has in about one to two months. He added that the Truth & Healing format will be used.

Comm. Wagner reiterated what Jim said and mentioned that there will be different levels of relationships with the state depending on the types of information the groups have available. He added that we are interested in feedback from the people we sent the document to so that we can be responsive to the community.

The meeting was then opened up for questions and comments. Some of the relevant questions included:

1. Akuahah Wheaton - Will the legislation to the state cover all Indian tribes in Massachusetts? Who are the Indigenous groups/tribes/bands that we are intending for this effort?

Comm. Wagner - There will be more than one effort to establish the basis for which tribes can have a relationship with the state.

Jim - This effort started with the Indian Arts & Crafts Act...to correct the fact that there are no official legislated state recognized tribes in Massachusetts. The tribes listed in the Earle Report are the primary groups intended for this effort.

2. Chief Lena 2Feathers - Who will control the information/documents that are submitted and how much information is needed to meet the 7 qualifications? And also, will the documents be under the control of the state?

Comm. Wagner – The document that was sent to the communities (*Information to Document Status of Native American Communities*) was to give everyone an idea of what is required for federal recognition. No group has to meet the 7 criteria. You only need to provide a list of the type of information your group has, whether the group is large or small. An example of what to list, that is in your possession, is: birth records; property records; family records, whatever you have (but do not send those documents now.)

3. Alexis Moreis - Who is on the Committee to receive their information?

Comm. Wagner - Right now, Burne and Jim are the two who will have custody of any information sent. There is no Committee yet.

4. Patricia Rocker - What is the intent of this process....federal recognition?

Jim - The intent of this process is to establish a formal relationship with the state. This process began in order for Native artisans to be able to sell artwork and label them as "Indian-made". The Indian Arts & Crafts Act defines a state recognized tribe through an official legislative process. Other federal agencies are also using that definition. The Earle Report was not accepted as an acknowledgement of state recognition. This process is a step towards that effort.

5. Tracy Eastman - Is there a deadline to submit the information?

Jim – The timeframe hasn't been set, though would like each group to gather their information so when we meet in a month or so it could be a basis for discussion.

Other questions asked or comments made pertained to the Commission office.

Cora Pierce said that there are rumors that when Jim retires that a Mashpee person will replace him. She said the process should be open to all. She also mentioned that some of the Commissioners have been on the Commission for a few decades and added that there is no representative for the Pocasset Tribe. Jim replied that the process to hire his replacement will be an open one and will be handled by the HR Department. With regards to the Commissioners, many are hold overs and will serve until they are replaced or reappointed.

Melissa Ferretti asked that since the Commission office is closed, where are the records? Who has custody of them? Jim replied that all saved records have been scanned and are on the state's hard drive.

The meeting ended at 7:01 PM.

Submitted by Burne Stanley and Jim Peters