



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
**DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING &
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION ON INDIAN AFFAIRS**

Maura T. Healey, Governor ♦ Kimberley Driscoll, Lieutenant Governor
Jennifer D. Maddox, Undersecretary ♦ John Peters, Jr., Executive Director

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

Monday, June 5, 2023 3:00 PM

Zoom was facilitated by Commissioner Gonzales

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

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

Community Members & Other Attendees (names from list of zoom participants): Junise Bliss, Nicole Brewer-Lowry, Native American LifeLines; Tracy Claudio, Bedford V.A.; Cheryl Cromwell, DPH; Melissa, Ferretti, Chairwoman, Herring Pond Wampanoag Tribe; Penny Gamble-Williams, Thomas Green, Raquel Halsey, NAICOB; Cheryll Holley, Amira Madison, City of Boston; Ryan Malonson, Alison Miller, Jenny Oliver, Jean-Luc Pierite, NAICOB; Jennifer Rawlings, Gino Roaming Buffalo, Ricky Simaratana, Deborah Spears Moorehead, Maria Turner, Akuahah Wheaton, and Ray Williams.

Names and phone numbers from the list of zoom participants whose last names were not included: Kerry, Kristine, and 920-200-8733.

Comm. Phillips called the meeting to order at 3:01 PM. Comm. Carter offered a prayer. Comm. Phillips then did a roll call of the Commissioners all of whom were present. Executive Director Jim Peters joined 15 minutes later as he had problems getting online.

1. A Synopsis of the Truth and Healing Seminar held in April 2023. Next Steps.

Comm. Anderson reported that she, Nicole Friederichs, Cedric Woods, Jim Peters, and Comm. Hill met to discuss the next steps. Cedric said they had a lot of positive feedback from the panel.

Comm. Anderson continued by saying that they will be determining which Tribes to contact for one-on-one town hall conversations. They first must set criteria, but are looking at between 7-9 tribal communities. In the one-on-one, they will listen to what that community wants and needs, as everyone is different. She said they feel this format will be a safe space where they can clearly identify and understand the needs and then frame goals.

They envision that there will be interns recording the event and note taking. The group will then compile the information and review the data in a large format setting like the panel conversation. They will also engage the Governor's office to attend the culmination event of the compiled data. Everyone was happy that Governor Healy's staff attended the panel discussion at Suffolk University in April.

The group anticipates having one a month town hall style zoom events with tribal communities after the summer - perhaps August or September 2023. She ended by saying that they anticipate the process to take about a year to complete.

She then shared the recording of the April panel discussion in the chat for those who missed the event.

Jim added that he was thinking about the panelist from California (Christina Snider) whose tribal situation is similar to that of the Eastern Tribes. Many of the California tribes were disbursed by the gold rush. He remembers her saying that their needs are different now from then and that genealogy and history are important and need to be considered.

2. State Recognition - Arts and Crafts

Jim reported that for Indian Arts and Crafts, there is no legislation that recognizes tribes by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. For federal recognition, there are 7 steps to be federally recognized. In New England, there are federal recognized tribes that met the criteria but they are not equal. The Narragansetts gave up a lot to the government to become sovereign. Mashpee and Aquinnah have something different. He went on to say that for arts and crafts purposes, there must be legislative action to be recognized by the state.

Discussion ensued on related issues such as:

*The Cherokee Nation is trying to get the federal government to make amendments to the Indian Arts & Craft Act to exclude state recognized tribes and to add Native Hawaiians.

*It was asked by Deborah Spears Moorehead of the Seaconke Wampanoag Tribe, why people are asking for documentation from her tribe as she said her tribe is recognized. She asked that when Slow Turtle recognized her tribe, is that now null and void? Jim responded that a proclamation, like what was given to the Seaconke Tribe, is not a binding legislative act. And also, what Slow Turtle did, he did as the Supreme Medicine Man of the Wampanoag Nation and not as the executive director of the Commission. He also mentioned that the Seaconke are not in the Earle Report unless they were part of a different community at the time. Junise Bliss of the tribe said she is concerned that the Seaconke Wampanoag are being attached on social media by a Pretend Indian Social Club. She would like to know where the tribe stands with the Commission on Indian Affairs. What do they need to do to be on the list or to resolve the problem? Jim said that what is needed is a clearer process and this can be done by developing criteria for state recognition and submitting it to the legislature. Criteria will include continuous history and genealogy.

*Melissa Ferretti of the Herring Pond Wampanoag Tribe stated that the language in the Arts & Crafts Acts limits language to possible state recognition and she has a problem with it. It's more than just making jewelry. They won't settle for just Arts & Crafts.

*Thomas Green of the Massachusetts Tribe at Ponkapoag, said that in 1861 the state ordered the Earle Report which included the Ponkapoag. Then in 1869 the state said they were no longer a tribe. Jim responded that the report was done so long ago and things have changed since then. The report needs to be updated.

3. Aboriginal Rights-Hunting & Fishing

Comm. Phillips open the topic by saying that tribal people are out there fishing and running into problems with Executive Order 126. He mentioned that Buddy Pocknett (Mashpee Wampanoag) worked hard fighting for aboriginal hunting and fishing rights. Jim responded that the guys went to court in the 1970's and 80's. The criteria in the Hunting & Fishing Resolution was about sustenance. Commercial fishing, with a tribal ID, is more than just feeding family. This has been a stumbling block with people within the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife. Jim said that the best way to proceed is to have respect and to know who your enforcement officers are to make things easier. Comm. Phillips ended the conversation by saying that as long as you know who you are, you shouldn't have a problem. It's about educating the Towns and having a relationship with town officials.

4. State Seal Commission Term Extension. Native Visions?

Jim reported that after 30 years we were able to get a special state seal commission set up to study the state seal and motto. The term was for 2 years and we have 6 Native

People on the Special Commission. Last year the terms expired but now have been extended for another year (Nov. 2023). The Special Commission hasn't gotten into a design of a new seal yet but most voted to change it. They feel that some changes should be made and are looking for feedback/suggestions. Notification of the upcoming meetings of the Special Commission will be sent to all so that they have an opportunity to attend and have input.

5. Cultural Appropriation

Comm. Hill said that we have to be aware when we're being appropriated. We are out there, free-styling and people can rip us off. If we're out there, we can't stop you from doing a program but if someone comes and tries to duplicate it without giving you recognition, call them out. Let the Commission on Indian Affairs know. Be aware that there is a distinct difference between cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation. Comm. Phillips shared that he knew a Native person who did programs for a few years for a person. The person took all of his information, got funded, and utilized his photos, his program and presented it themselves without him. It's important moving forward to have a contract and put some strong language in it. Include a clause in the contract that photos can't be used, etc.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 PM.

Submitted by Burne Stanley and Jim Peters