



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**

Monday, October 30, 2023 3:00 PM

Zoom was facilitated by Commissioner Gonzales

Commissioners Present: Tashanna Carter, Aaron Gonzales, Gail Hill, and Mike Wagner.

Commissioners Absent: Rhonda Anderson and Troy Phillips, Chairman.

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

Community Members & Other Attendees (names from list of zoom participants):

Courtney Akbar, Kym Ayala, Chairwoman Andrews-Maltais, Joan Barnes, Ella Blackowl, Nicole Brewer-Lowry, Cheryl Cromwell, DPH; Tracy Eastman, Candia Flynn, Penny Gamble-Williams, Herring Pond Wampanoag Tribe, Jamie Hull, Nehemiah Jordan, Massachusetts Tribe, Patrick McCartin, Mildred McCowan, Annie McKnight, Penny Monk, Ellie Page, Jon Patton, DCR; Wendy Pearl, DCR; Crystal Pereria, Patricia Rocker, Veronica Rocker, Shana Simmons, Elizabeth Solomon, Natalie Turner, Akuahah Wheaton, and Ray Williams.

Names or phone numbers from the list of zoom participants whose last names were not included: 2Feathers, Cassie, Cheryll, Diane2TvWze, Kristina, Peaceful, Cora NITHPO, Marcus, Roaming, and 6173312559.

Comm. Wagner called the meeting to order at 3:07 PM.

1. State Seal Commission Survey Results.

Jim Peters gave an overview of the survey results. After some verbal corrections during the meeting, here are the breakdowns of the two surveys:

Public Survey Results for most preferred symbols for State Seal:

Shape of Massachusetts – 69.6%

Coast or Shoreline – 58.5%

Right Whale - 58.4%

Mayflower – 56.0%

Cranberries – 53.8%

Native/Indigenous Person – 52.2%

Jim commented that in the public survey (above), the Native person wasn't the highest vote, the shape of the state of Massachusetts was.

Native American Participants Survey Results for most preferred symbols for State Seal:

Native/Indigenous Person – 65.1%

Coast or Shoreline – 62.5%

Cranberries – 62.4%

Right Whale - 60.4%

The legislation requires an educational component relative to examining the state seal and motto, so Elizabeth Solomon from the Massachusetts Tribe at Ponkapoag, drafted recommendations to be reviewed by the Special Commission. The report is entitled "Recommendations for an Educational Program on the Seal and Motto of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts." Ms. Solomon stated that it talks about formalizing a plan for K-12 grade.

Jim mentioned that the deadline for the Special Commission to make their recommendations to the State Legislature is November 15, 2023. At the next meeting of the Special Commission, scheduled for Wednesday, November 1, 2023, members will digest the results of the surveys and talk about what recommendations will be submitted to the Legislature. The Legislature will decide on the next steps.

2. Mass 250th American Revolution Anniversary Commission

Jim Peters, who sits on the Diversity & Inclusion Committee of the Massachusetts 250th American Revolution Commission, informed us that the next event of the Special Commission is the Anniversary of the Boston Tea Party on December 16, 2023. He stated that Gov. Baker and organizers of this 2026 commemoration deemed it important that under-represented participants of this war and founding of America be involved in its events.

3. National Congress of American Indians (NCAI)

There is some concern amongst Massachusetts tribal members regarding a resolution submitted by several federally recognized tribes to eliminate state recognized tribes from membership in the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI).

Melissa Ferretti, Chairwoman of the Herring Pond Wampanoag Tribe, said she is very upset with NCAI as it's not their mission to eliminate tribes. She spoke about her tribe's application that was submitted to NCAI for membership and how rigorous the process was. She hopes this effort to eliminate state recognized tribes doesn't happen and plans to attend their annual meeting in November.

Others mentioned that at the upcoming NCAI meeting, the resolution submitted will consider reducing the privileges of member state recognized tribes. If adopted, state tribes will still have membership in NCAI but voting privileges might be reduced or eliminated.

Comm. Wagner stated that's why we need to get funding to hire professionals to evaluate the history of the tribes in Massachusetts. It will be tragic if tribes are ignored by NCAI and others who are fraudulent. Jim responded saying that's why we want to have interviews with Truth & Healing Commission to see what the tribes have for documents. This led to the next topic.

4. Truth and Healing Tribal Invites.

Jim Peters mentioned that the proposal with the Truth and Healing Commission is to talk about how much information the tribes have gathered and who they are. He said that, right now, Nicole Friederichs at Suffolk University Law School, is setting up meetings with some of the tribes to hear where they're going and what type of relationship they want to develop with the state.

5. DCR Interest in Native Consultations.

Jim Peters reported that a few weeks ago he, Nicole Friederichs, and Comm. Phillips met with some members of the Dept. of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). He said that DCR is a big department with control over many of the parks, waterways and hunting grounds that are relative to Natives.

Wendy Pearl, Director of Cultural Resources at the Dept. of Conservation and Recreation who attended the meeting, thanked Jim for the summary. She explained how the Dept., that has been overseeing lands like state parks, forest and waterways, wants to develop a meaningful relationship with Natives so that the Dept. is more responsive

and reliable. The Dept. is looking forward to the next steps with the Truth and Healing Commission.

Eleanor "Ellie" Page commented that the Pocasset Tribe has had a good relationship with DCR at Battleship with summer workers that have been working there. She said they look forward to continuing working with DCR.

Elizabeth Solomon commented on how related all these things are to each other....Truth & Healing, State Recognition, other entities that want to establish a relationship with the Indigenous communities. She said we need the Truth & Healing Commission. She went on to say that they received an Instagram message saying that the Massachusetts Tribe at Ponkapoag is not a historic tribe. It was very hurtful. She remarked that before we develop a relationship with the State, we need to develop a relationship with each other. Jim concurred.

Executive Session

At 4:11 PM, Comm. Wagner announced that Commissioners (and staff) would be going into executive session. The public meeting ended at that time.

Submitted by Burne Stanley and Jim Peters

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Executive Session summary

Comm. Wagner said there is a lot of interest out there about what is going to happen when Jim retires. He wanted to understand the process of hiring Jim's replacement.

Burne shared what she knows about the process. It is her understanding that the Human Resources Department will confer with Jim on what the job duties would be, his retirement date so that an opening date for the job can be included in the job description. As required by law, HR will post the job to the public. The Commission on Indian Affairs will also circulate the job posting to the Native communities. After applicants apply, interviews will take place with potential candidates. In the past, Commissioners have been involved in making a recommendation to the Department on who they would like to see as Executive Director. There was a question as to whether the Governor appointed this person. Because this is a staff position and not an "appointed" position like those of the Commissioners, the Governor does not appoint this person. The person is hired through HR.