

Council on American Indian Concerns

Regular Monthly Meeting, September 10, 2008
DNR Conference Room, Atlanta

Council members in attendance: Nealie McCormick, Marilyn McGaughey, Ralph Crews, Tom Gresham, Sarah Hill, Royce McCrary, and JB Jones.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Nealie McCormick at 1:30 pm. Ralph Crews led the opening prayer.

The August, 2008 meeting minutes, which had been emailed to members earlier, were approved as sent.

The first item of business was a status report regarding the Council's efforts to draft and adopt Rules and Regulations. Invited guest DNR attorney Emily Hitchcock stated that she had reviewed the files of the Council's work. She confirmed that we need to remove the language that simply repeats code sections. She agreed that the principal intent of Rules and Regulations is to guide the implementation of the code sections. She presented her written responses to questions we raised following our August meeting. She emphasized that we need to get the Law Department of the state's Attorney General's office to help with wording and content issues. She has specific concerns with portions of our drafted Rules and Regulations and has conveyed those concerns to the Attorney General's office. She identified John Henley, Chief of the Environmental Section, as our contact in the Law Department. On a motion by JB Jones, seconded by Sarah Hill, we voted to have Marilyn hand deliver the latest draft of our Rules and Regulations, along with a copy of Ms. Hitchcock's comments, to John Henley as soon as possible.

Invited guest State Archaeologist David Crass then addressed the Council regarding the burial that is eroding out of the bluff on the south end of Ossabaw Island. He recalled that in late May, 2008 he notified the Council of the burial's exposure and proposed both immediate and longer term measures to alleviate the immediate problem and help anticipate such burial exposures in the future. He also raised the possibility that the Council and his office pool financial resources to conduct the needed salvage as well as further study. Dr. Crass stated that his goal today is to move the discussions along, particularly since the exposed burial could slump entirely into river after one good storm. He reported that the south end of the island has a large prehistoric site with two historic period components. He reminded the Council that three prehistoric burials have eroded in the past six or seven years and that his office was able to recover them. The presently-eroding burial is quite different, with a flat-bottomed grave shaft, charcoal and an apparent extended burial. It contained one aboriginal potsherd.

Dr. Crass identified three options for dealing with the burial:

- 1) let it slump into the river;
- 2) salvage it;

3) salvage it and conduct a ground penetrating radar (GPR) study of the bluff edge to detect other burials that might erode in the future.

After some discussion the Council selected Option 3 as the best course of action, providing that funding can be worked out. Discussion then focused on funding. Dr. Crass reported that the State of Georgia is the landowner, and that DNR's Wildlife Resources Division is the land manager. Since the Council asks private land owners to fund the protection of burials found on their land, we agreed that we should ask the Wildlife Resources Division to fund the burial's exhumation and provide logistical support on the island (housing and vehicles). In a motion by Sarah Hill, seconded by Marilyn McGaughey, the Council voted to request the Wildlife Resources Division to fund exhumation of the burial, and the Council will join the Archaeological Services Unit of the Historic Preservation Division to share the cost of the GPR survey. We agreed that Tom Gresham will contact archaeologist Dan Elliott to see if he can do both the burial salvage and GPR survey within a month or so. If he cannot, Tom will contact an archeological firm, probably Brockington & Associates, to see if they can conduct the burial salvage. Tom will write a letter, to be reviewed by others, to the Wildlife Resources Division requesting funding and logistical support for the burial salvage.

Ongoing Business

Pam Meditz reviewed the previous month's log of three telephone calls to the Council. Linda Moye provided the requested information. Sarah Hill presented the log of six email inquiries since the last meeting. She passed one request to Tom Gresham (regarding an ARPA permit) and one to Christine Neal (regarding the need for cleaning the historic cemetery next to the Indian Springs park and hotel). There was one request for a letter-writing campaign to protest unwarranted digging at Trail of Tears sites in Georgia.

Regarding the distribution of *Frontiers in the Soil*, Ralph Crews presented a list of 12 libraries in south Georgia to which he delivered copies; JB Jones presented a list of 20 schools and libraries, mostly in the White and Lumpkin County area, to which he distributed copies and Tom Gresham presented a list of ten schools and libraries in the Athens area to which he dropped off copies. Others had not yet had a chance to deliver their books. Sarah Hill, who was absent at the last meeting, took 10 copies for distribution. We agreed that we should place information about obtaining copies of *Frontiers in the Soil* on our web site, and Tom Gresham and Sarah Hill will take care of that.

In recent news items relating to American Indians, JB Jones mentioned an article and photo of the Governor signing a Trail of Tears proclamation with Dan and Dola Davis, an article about a Cherokee gathering in Cedartown relating to the Trail of Tears and several articles about the native grasses project at Etowah Mounds State Historic Site. Ralph Crews informed the Council about his tribe's annual pow wow in St. George on October 2-4, which includes a special recognition of veterans. Marilyn McGaughey cited articles about the American Indian Land Trust Fund suit in which about \$455 million, instead of billions, is to be awarded to native peoples, about a group selling "tribal memberships" to illegal aliens under the pretense that they will prevent deportation and about a California tribe that passed a law allowing same-sex

marriages. In response to a question by JB Jones, Dan and Dola Davis said that they have been informed that their petition for federal recognition is “next in line”.

Nealie McCormick reported for the Economic Development committee that the aircraft parts plant being built in southwest Georgia is near completion and that its communication with a sister plant in Norcross is now being tested. The venture is bringing private money to Georgia, mainly in the form of jobs for demand processing orders for military aircraft parts. A press release about the opening of the facility will be issued soon and the Council should be mentioned as a partner in bringing this venture to Georgia.

Tom Gresham reported that he composed and mailed letters from the Council to Whitfield County Board of Education and Board of Commissioners about the cemetery at Prater’s Mill. The letters ask the Boards to look into the purported location of graves on property that is being developed for a school. Pam Meditz reported that we have not received a response.

Tom Gresham stated that this morning he delivered to the Waring Lab at the University of West Georgia the box of human remains that Karen Burns brought to the August meeting. They will be incorporated into our holdings. Tom further reported that curation manager Susan Fishman-Armstrong showed him the 35 or so boxes of Council materials that have been processed and entered into their curation system. She is still waiting to receive the very large, specially built cardboard box that will house the burial urn from the old Governor’s mansion in Milledgeville. The Council will probably be invoiced for labor and materials when the box arrives.

New Business

Marilyn McGaughey raised the issue of Council funding for Nealie and Vonnie McCormick’s registration and travel expenses to the Governors’ Interstate Tribal Conference, which will be in South Dakota this year. Nealie said he did not expect to have all expenses covered. There was consensus that it is important for the Council to be represented at the conference. On a motion by Marilyn McGaughey seconded by Ralph Crews, the Council voted to spend \$1,500.00 for the trip.

Marilyn McGaughey reported that PeachCare has been funded through 2009.

Tom Gresham presented the final version of the annual report to the Governor for FY 2008 that he and Sarah Hill had prepared. A slightly different version (lacking page numbers and containing a few stray marks) had been emailed to Council members. The annual report was accepted as presented. Marilyn McGaughey will hand deliver two copies with transmittal letters to the Governor’s office in the next few days. Tom Gresham will mail out copies to the four people that were copied on the transmittal letter.

Sarah Hill showed the group a thin, flexible ruler with images and interesting facts about Indians that she received from the National Museum of the American Indian. She remarked that this might be a good, inexpensive means to reach out to the public. She also showed the Council

two new books about the politics of Indian recognition. She will share the books with Council members or report back after reading them.

Nealie McCormick informed the Council that the City of West Point, Georgia had responded to our letter expressing concern about possible Indian graves in an area on the Chattahoochee River slated for development. The letter was handed to Tom Gresham, who quickly scanned it and an attached archeological report. Tom reported that, at first glance, it appears that the city requested the developer to hire an archeologist and that four prehistoric sites were found, none of which were judged likely to contain burials. Tom concluded that it appeared to be a good, reasonable level of effort and concern. The Council asked Tom to write an acknowledgment letter to West Point.

Marilyn McGaughey mentioned that recent news stories have discussed the possible closing of or curtailing hours at certain state parks and historic sites to comply with the Governor's requested budget reductions by every state department. However, it was pointed out that nothing has yet been decided in regard to budget cuts at DNR.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

Visitors: Frankie Mewborn, Pam Meditz, David Crass, Frances Crews, Gisela Gresham, Dan and Dola Davis, Emily Hitchcock, and Dana Russell