

Council on American Indian Concerns

Regular Monthly Meeting, Nov. 12, 2008
DNR Conference Room, Atlanta

Council members present: Nealie McCormick, Marilyn McGaughey, Ralph Crews, Sarah Hill, Royce McCrary

The meeting was called to order by Chair Nealie McCormick at 1:40 p.m. after Ralph Crews led the opening prayer.

Nalie McCormick reported that the annual contract between the Council and the state Office of Planning and Budget has been signed, subsequent to a reminder call to that office from Council member J.B. Jones. J.B. joined Nealie and Vonnie McCormick to visit Lt. Governor Casey Cagle and inform him about economic issues and development in Georgia's Indian communities. They discussed the Lower Muscogee Creek initiative (Mecco Enterprises) and the potential of increased tourism for the Cherokee Tribal Council on the coast. In addition, they informed the lieutenant governor about the Lower Muscogee Creek assistance in bringing the state into compliance with federal regulations governing vocational rehabilitation. And finally, they told Mr. Cagle about a substantial donation to the Lower Muscogee Creek from Floridian William Witherspoon and the use of the donated funds to bus school children to the Creek tribal grounds for educational purposes. The participants emphasized the point that whatever benefits Indian children also benefits the larger community.

Ralph Crews announced that his tribe will participate in a mini pow wow on Nov. 19th at the submarine base at St. Mary's.

Nalie McCormick led a discussion of the need to fill the Council position of physical anthropologist Karen Burns, who has moved to Utah. The Council members agreed that Marilyn McGaughey will contact Karen to get her recommendations and will give those names and contact information to Nealie. Marilyn will also ask Karen how she wants to participate in the replacement process.

Marilyn McGaughey then reviewed Tom Gresham's Oct. 27th letter to Tom Whitley at Brockington Associates. In the letter Tom noted that he heard Mr. Whitley speak at a meeting of the Georgia Society of Archaeologists about the Brockington firm's work at the Cabin Bluff burial site in Camden County. He questioned Mr. Whitley's statement that the Council had suggested further excavation of burials at the site and noted that he had reviewed the minutes of the Council meeting where Mr. Whitley described the site and had found no such suggestion in the minutes. In addition, Tom consulted with Nealie McCormick and Marilyn McGaughey to confirm that the Council had not suggested additional excavation. Tom's letter stressed the Council's guiding principle that burials remain undisturbed whenever possible and emphasized that the Council cannot be used as a route to circumvent federal policies regarding excavation or repatriation. Mr. Whitley responded in a letter dated Oct. 31st that he had not intended to misstate the Council's position in his unscripted talk and that he was in agreement with

the Council's position regarding burials. He stated that no further excavations are planned and that he will notify the Council of any likelihood that the burials will be disturbed. Noting that the landowners are protecting the site by limiting knowledge of and access to it, he stated that an archaeologist from the Brockington firm regularly visits the site to verify its protection.

Responding to a request at the September 10th Council meeting, Marilyn McGaughey delivered the drafted Council Rules and Regulations to the Office of the Attorney General. Prior to delivery Marilyn contacted Diane L. DeShazo in that office for suggestions about a cover letter to accompany the draft. Following delivery Marilyn learned that John Henley of that office has given the draft to Ms. DeShazo for review. Ms. DeShazo has now asked Marilyn to fax any previous reviews that are not voluminous. Pam Meditz agreed to fax Ms. DeShazo the November, 2004 review.

Nealie McCormick reported that the Council received a letter from Dan Parish stating that he has been transferred to the office of Boating and Marine Theft and will no longer be working with the Council. At Nealie's suggestion the Council agreed to send Mr. Parish a letter of appreciation and a plaque for his many years of help. Marilyn McGaughey will draft the letter and order the plaque.

The Council discussed the universally-positive response to *Frontiers in the Soil*, the book on Georgia archaeology distributed to a few local schools by individual Council members. Noting the lack of age-appropriate information about Georgia's Indian heritage and cultures, Vonnie McCormick announced that as of July 1st 2008 all Georgia 2nd graders are required to study the Creek and Cherokee Indians. At the Council's request Vonnie will ask William Witherspoon to consider donating funds to allow the Council to make additional distributions of *Frontiers in the Soil*. She will provide Mr. Witherspoon with a copy of the favorable article in the *Pelham Journal* that featured Nealie McCormick as he presented the book to a local school.

Nealie McCormick described attending (with Vonnie) the Governor's Interstate Indian Council meeting in Pine Ridge, North Dakota. He pointed out that in spite of the terrible poverty confronting the Pine Ridge Indians they are working hard to educate their youth and develop economic initiatives to provide jobs. He noted that alcohol sales are prohibited on the reservation, but that alcohol is readily available at the state line and continues to create a problem. In addition to Pine Ridge the McCormicks visited Red Cloud and Wounded Knee, where they learned from local residents that the 1970s Wounded Knee conflict had been largely instigated by Canadian Indians. The murders and arson during the conflict remain unresolved. Vonnie was elected to a two-year term on the Board of the GIIC, joining Nealie as he completes his two-year term.

At Nealie McCormick's suggestion, Marilyn McGaughey moved that the Council present annual letters of commendations, accompanied by plaques, to companies that have promoted economic development in Indian communities. Ralph Crews seconded the motion, which carried.

Marilyn McGaughey asked Pam Meditz to update Council members about the possible closings of state sites and offices. Pam reported that nothing definite has been decided and that the budget cuts may range from 6 to 10 per cent. Marilyn then read a letter she wrote to Parks and Historic Sites Director Becky Kelly commending her department for outstanding stewardship of the properties belonging to the citizens of Georgia and for the knowledgeable and helpful rangers working at state sites. Marilyn sent copies of the letter to the governor and the commissioner of DNR.

Marilyn McGaughey read a letter she received from Susan Nugent, Director of the Fernbank Museum of Natural History, thanking the Council for the grant of \$1500.00 and appreciating the Council's partnership with and support of the Museum.

The Council corrected the September meeting minutes (there was no October meeting), which had been emailed earlier to the members. Nealie McCormick clarified that the Lower Muscogee Creek Tribe does not make parts for aircraft but, instead, has created a demand processing center that gathers information on bids and processes orders for industries. Ralph Crews stated that the minutes indicate (page 3) that Council members received copies of the annual report to the governor but that he has not received a copy. He asked that a copy be provided for him. Marilyn McGaughey pointed out that her name is misspelled on page 3. The Council agreed that the final revision of the minutes had probably not been sent to the members.

As part of Council discussion of the invaluable work of Tom Gresham, Ralph Crews moved that the Council present Tom with a plaque of appreciation. Royce McCrary seconded the motion, which carried. Marilyn McGaughey will order the plaque.

Ralph Crews presented the Treasurer's report, which reported Nov. 7th's expense projections of \$17,981.01 and allotment of \$27,750.00, leaving a difference for the year of \$9,768.99.

As requested by Nealie McCormick, Vonnie McCormick discussed Mecco Enterprises, the economic initiative of the Lower Muscogee Creek Tribe. Operational for 5 months, it currently employs 3 people who are trained or are in training for demand processing, contract administration, and vendor services. The work requires contacting vendors and services all over the country to identify the best bids for specific products and entering the substantial data into logs for the participating companies. Following the purchases a portion of money goes back into the purchasing company and the remainder goes to the tribe for scholarships for education. The facility is on the Lower Muscogee Creek reservation and its future expansion is likely. The motto for Mecco Enterprises is "Protect our Heritage by Protecting our Future." Although current employees are tribal members, hiring is not restricted.

Sarah Hill reported that she has distributed copies of *Frontiers in the Soil* to 4 elementary schools in DeKalb County, 4 in Fulton County, and 2 to Atlanta public libraries.

Sarah Hill reported on the email sent to the Council via the Council web site and commended the work of web master Mike Chadwell.

Ralph Crews announced that Cherokee Chief John Hilton of South Carolina recently died. His funeral was attended by a considerable crowd.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:55 p.m.

Visitors: Pam Meditz, Frances Crews, Vonnie McCormick, Dola and Dan Davis