

Council on American Indian Concerns

Regular Monthly Meeting, June 10, 2009  
DNR Conference Room, Atlanta

Council members in attendance: Nealie McCormick, Marilyn McGaughey, Ralph Crews, Tom Gresham, Bobby Tuggle, and Sarah Hill

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Nealie McCormick at 1:35 pm. Ralph Crews led the opening prayer.

The May, 2009 meeting minutes, which had been emailed to members earlier, were approved as presented.

The treasurer's report for expenses to date and a projection of expenses for the remainder of FY 2009 (attached) was read by Ralph Crews. This indicated an unspent balance of about \$4,150 for FY 2009.

Invited guest Jim Langford addressed the Council, mainly to inform and update us on the archeological work his Coosawattee Foundation has done on the Thompson Site in Gordon County. Mr. Langford, executive director of the Coosawattee Foundation, began by expressing his pleasure with the work of the Council, noting especially the web site and the adoption of burial policies. He remarked that when the legislation that created the Council in 1993 was drafted, no one really knew what role the Council would play, and he is pleased to see that it has been a positive one. He said that not a great deal of new information has come from the Thompson Site, but since it has been many years since he has met with the Council he wanted to update us anyway. He related that since the 1990s the Coosawattee Foundation has taught about 15,000 adults and youth about archeology and prehistory, and 2,000 of them worked at the site, which is on the banks of the Coosawattee River. The 12- to 15-acre site has several components, but the main focus is on the Mississippian occupation that dates from about AD 1400 to 1600. It is one of many towns in the Coosa Province visited by DeSoto in 1540. A few burials at the site had been plowed and looted. Subsequently, in the ensuing years the Foundation has recovered other burial material. Per an agreement with federal tribes reached at the beginning of the project, these materials are being maintained by the Foundation. The intention is to repatriate them along with the material from the Etowah Mounds Historic Site once arrangements for that transfer have been finalized. Only a small portion of the site, which is owned by the Foundation, has been excavated. Many features, including vegetation, burned houses and a possible palisade, can be seen with experimental satellite work. Public work has stopped for the present while the material is analyzed and recorded.

Invited guest Dr. David Hurst Thomas, curator with the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, then addressed the Council about his decades of archeological investigation on St. Catherine's Island. He began by outlining his interactions with Native Americans since the 1970s on a variety of common issues, but principally on burial issues. He

described how he and the American Museum of Natural History began work on St Catherine's in 1974, with support from the two owners, the Edward John Noble Foundation, and the St. Catherine's Island Foundation. The work has been multi-disciplinary and has resulted in numerous publications, including dissertations and books. Dr. Thomas presented to the Council two of the most recent publications, a three-volume set on the archeology of the island and a volume on the more than 70,000 beads that have been recovered. All the excavated St. Catherine's material has been given to Fernbank. He mentioned that his work gained a great deal of attention and press coverage when the Spanish mission, Santa Catalina de Guale, was investigated in the 1980s and 1990s. Hundreds of burials, Indian and Spanish, were discovered, investigated and then reburied. In the past decade attention has shifted to the other 100+ sites on the island that date from the Late Archaic through the Mississippian periods. A particular focus of the continuing investigations will be health, diet and disease through time. Dr. Thomas stated that it appears that Indians on the coast were most healthy about 4,000 years ago, and became less healthy with the introduction of maize and sedentism. It is possible that populations were in decline before Old World diseases were introduced by Spaniards. Dr. Thomas expressed an interest in pursuing DNA analysis if appropriate burial material is recovered, and hopes to collaborate with all stakeholders. In response to his request for questions, Dr. Thomas said he would be happy to send each Council member a set of the recent publications about his work on the island.

Deborah Hinote (Poarch Creek Band), who is working for the U.S. Census Bureau, addressed the Council regarding the upcoming 2010 census. She said that she wants to help ensure that all Indians are counted and asked the Council to help her, mainly by getting the word out that the census will help Indians. She said that for this census, tribal affiliation will be self-determined; that is, it will be fill-in-the-blank, and not a choice from list. She noted that Census day is April 1, 2010. She handed out census packets to each Council member. Nealie McCormick suggested she work with each state tribe, and she said she would.

Nalie McCormick said that he thought new Council member Rick Snow was to attend today's meeting. Nealie will contact him again to make sure he attends the next meeting.

Marilyn McGaughey led a discussion on recent and proposed additional budget cuts. She informed the Council that she wrote a strong email for the Council to DNR Commissioner Chris Clark lamenting the cuts to the three Indian historic sites and stressing that those cuts endanger the preservation and welfare of the sites. She reported that Mr. Clark wrote back expressing concern and a desire to get more input from the Council. After discussion, the Council agreed that Marilyn and Sarah Hill would write a letter to Mr. Clark, fully expressing our concerns. Sarah suggested that the Council write letters of thanks to Historic Sites personnel who have been laid off by the recent budget cuts.

Nalie McCormick reported that a Bill Evans of North Carolina wrote to State Archaeologist David Crass about a program he is developing to save sites. It was not clear what the intent of the program is and whether he is seeking help.

Marilyn McGaughey reported that our Rules and Regulations continue to make slow, steady progress towards finalization.

Regarding budget issues, Frankie informed the Council that he is talking with the Office of Planning and Budget about our new contract which should be ready soon. Frankie stated that if we keep the current parking arrangement (monthly payment for anytime use), it will cost the Council \$1,344 for next year. It would be considerably less if we chose to use a more distant lot that costs \$5.00 per use. After much discussion about safety, ease of carrying materials and logistics, the Council decided to keep the present arrangement of paying for parking in the near lot for each member for the coming year.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:02 p.m.

Visitors: Frankie Mewborn, David Crass, David Hurst Thomas, Jim Langford, Deborah Hinote, Vonnie McCormick, Frances Crews, Dan Davis