

Council on American Indian Concerns

Regular Monthly Meeting, October 14, 2009
DNR Conference Room, Atlanta

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

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Nealie McCormick at 1:37 p.m. Ralph Crews led the opening prayer.

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

The treasurer's report for the current year, FY 2010, was read by Ralph Crews. Only \$711.12 of expenses have been posted to date. In response to a question by Marilyn McGaughey, it was reported that the contract between the Office of Planning and Budget and the Department of Natural Resources for the operation of the Indian Council in FY 2010 is still at OPB waiting for a signature. Expenses are being paid by DNR with their expectation that the funds will be transferred.

Sarah Hill, who had emailed copies of the web mail to Council members in advance of the meeting, affirmed that we have received only routine email inquiries in the past month. Linda Moye submitted the previous month's telephone log by email, and this reflected eight calls of a routine nature.

New Business

Tom Gresham reported that the Council had received a request from Ga DNR and State Archaeologist Dave Crass to visit a site in Burke County that had been recently looted by pothunters. Tom met with a DNR ranger on October 1, 2009 to view and assess the site. Tom presented a report of his findings to DNR on October 5, with copies to the Council. The site is a Late Archaic period shell midden on a bluff overlooking the Ogeechee River that dates to about 4,000 years ago. It had been extensively dug into by relict collectors, who left piles of pottery sherds, stone flakes and human and animal bone. Several of the looters have been apprehended. Tom reported to the Council that a return trip or two would be needed to document the looting disturbance and to collect the scattered artifacts and bone. The Council authorized Tom to make trips back to the site as necessary. Tom said DNR and the landowner, who is cooperative, will discuss final disposition of the materials and the site in the coming months.

Ryan Kennedy, representing an ailing Dave Crass, brought two items to the attention of the Council. First, he mentioned that the State Archaeologist is re-evaluating how his office handles oversight of forestry management practices on State lands. Every year the Archeological Services Unit gets requests for archeological clearance on 30 to 40 tracts of state-owned land that are scheduled for timber thinning or cutting. Currently, accommodating the requests requires

a great deal of archeological work in a short amount of time by a very small staff. The second issue addressed by Ryan was raised at the Council's last meeting and regards State Indian-related projects that needing funding support. Dr. Crass' office compiled and prioritized the following short list:

1. Conduct a second round of archeological investigations of burial sites on the south end of Ossabaw Island (at Newell Bluff); the main goal would be to ground truth the ground penetrating radar study done last year and to confirm whether there is a mound at the bluff edge from where burials erode.
2. Archeologically investigate comparable pieces of DNR land, such as some bluffs along the Altamaha River.
3. Address many needs at Etowah Mounds State Historic Site; particularly regarding the museum and artifacts.

DNR (Parks and Historic Sites) archeologist Debbie Walsmith spoke about recent developments regarding Etowah. She said that a commissioned, third party report about the conditions at Etowah has been completed and will soon be made public by conservation expert Michael Trinkley and architectural historian Jack Pyburn. The assessment was funded by a federal Conservation Assessment Program grant. The report promises to be comprehensive, and will make many recommendations.

Tom Gresham discussed a report the Council received from Dr. Ervan Garrison, the UGA archeologist who has worked on Skidaway Island for many years. In the report written September 11, 2009 Garrison states that the burial that was exposed and reported to the Council last fall was investigated on September 11, 2009 and no human remains or burial objects were located. The burial had most likely eroded into the tidal creek bed. Dr. Garrison noted that there was a long delay in getting local law enforcement to visit the site and declare it "not a crime scene," which contributed to the loss of the remains. Tom Gresham pointed out that this procedural delay has been a recurring problem at Skidaway Island, that we had developed a protocol to expedite the process, but that since the law requires notification of local law enforcement the problem has continued. Tom noted that we had reminded Dr. Garrison that we recommend notifying the coroner as well as local law enforcement when a burial is exposed, and then working with the coroner (who will come promptly). The Council agreed that Tom will write to Dr. Garrison to remind him again of this policy to facilitate rapid investigation of future exposures.

Ongoing Business

Regarding Rules and Regulations, no progress has been made. Nealie McCormick reported that he called the Attorney General's office but has received no response.

Marilyn McGaughey and Sarah Hill reported on their meeting several weeks ago with DNR Commissioner Chris Clark and Becky Kelly, and the follow up meeting Becky arranged with Sally Winchester and Linda Patrick in the Historic Sites Division. They discussed how to best highlight and promote Georgia's Native American historic sites. Becky Kelly had proposed inserting a single panel in the Historic Sites brochure but Sally and Linda told Marilyn and Sarah

that the single insert would cost \$12,000.00 and could not be done at this time. Similarly, Commissioner Clark had suggested a new rack card for the four sites, but Sally and Linda said the DNR is no longer printing rack cards. DNR and Commissioner Clark believe that Indian sites need to be promoted. Debbie Walsmith said the Georgia Department of Transportation is producing a Handbook of Indian Sites of Georgia that sounds very similar to what we are trying to develop. She believes it will be a 28-page booklet in a 5 ½ by 8 inch format. She suggested that Sarah or Marilyn contact GDOT archeologist Erik Duff.

In response to a request by Sarah Hill, the DNR produced a tally of attendance and revenue figures for all State parks and historic sites for FY 2008, and Sarah distributed copies of the tally to the Council.

Debbie Walsmith described to the Council recent efforts by DNR regarding the loan of a ceremonial axe from Etowah to the Florida Natural History Museum in Gainesville. She said letters had been sent to the federally-recognized Creek tribes seeking permission to make the loan for an exhibit on trade networks opening in July of 2010. The museum would like to have the axe by Christmas 2009 in order to make its secure display case. Marilyn McGaughey asked Debbie to ensure that the Council is notified any time the DNR intends to lend Indian artifacts, and Debbie said they would do so.

Debbie Walsmith then spoke about the Native American historic sites, reporting that all three are open only Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Kolomoki is a park as well as a Native site and is therefore open regular days and hours. JB Jones asked if DNR could shift employee hours around to meet the days and times of greatest demand. That is, for example, cut back in winter months to open longer in fall, spring and summer. Discussion ensued about economic development and how to best save the state's historic sites. On a positive note, Debbie Walsmith said that Kolomoki had received a \$300,00 Transportation Enhancement grant and that DNR has commissioned a new audio tour of New Echota.

Nealie McCormick said that the Governors Interstate Indian Conference had been cancelled due to lack of sponsorship, and that some business would occur in a teleconference.

Marilyn McGaughey updated the Council on the Cherokee Nation's offer to help finance the operation of the Vann House and New Echota State historic sites. DNR said they cannot legally accept some of the conditions attached to the offer, but that discussions will continue with the new Tribal Council of the Eastern Band of Cherokees in North Carolina and a new fiscal year proposal for the Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma.

Marilyn McGaughey also informed the Council on efforts to increase the dialog between the Creek Nation, DNR and various entities near the Etowah Mounds regarding the enhancement of the Etowah Mounds historic site. A new group has been formed to better coordinate efforts between the historic site and the supporting groups at site preservation and promotion. Marilyn reported that Jim Langford is taking a lead on moving this discussion along. Many groups, including western tribes, state and local officials, tourism officials and the public, want to improve the facilities at Etowah, and all want a guarantee of long term state ownership and management of the historic site.

In news items related to Indians, Marilyn McGaughey mentioned an article in Archaeology magazine about the history of chunky stones. JB Jones presented the Council with several articles about the final, satisfying resolution to the issue of unmarked graves on the property of the Frogtown Cellars winery. The articles highlighted a public ceremony on the winery grounds to commemorate the grave of a Revolutionary soldier who was part Cherokee. Sarah Hill thanked JB for his extraordinary diplomatic skill in happily resolving what began as a heated dispute between the winery owner and a descendant. Sarah Hill briefly discussed an article from American Indian about a twentieth century cultural eugenics (or documentary genocide) movement in Virginia that sought to eradicate Indian identity from public records of that state. She distributed copies of the article to the Council members.

Ralph Crews announced that their tribal pow wow in early October drew over 3,000 visitors.

The Council was reminded that our next meeting will be held on the third Wednesday of November (the 18th) due to the fact that our regular meeting day falls on Veterans Day.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:35 p.m.

Visitors: Ryan Kennedy, Debbie Walsmith, Vonnie McCormick, Frances Crews, Ann Williams