

Council on American Indian Concerns

Regular Monthly Meeting, January 13, 2010  
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 November, 2009 meeting minutes, which had been emailed to members earlier, were approved as submitted.

Nalie McCormick happily reported that the Council is now in possession of the fully executed contract between the Office of Planning and Budget and the Department of Natural Resources for the operation of the Indian Council in FY 2010.

The agenda order was suspended in order to hear from the guest speakers.

Nalie McCormick invited State Archaeologist David Crass to discuss a case of archeological site looting and burial disturbance in Burke County. Dr. Crass reported that he and Tom Gresham testified at a sentencing hearing last week in Burke County at which the State Court judge gave jail time, community service time, heavy fines, and a ban from artifact shows to two persons caught digging on a site. Tom reported that two different men caught on the site on another day changed their plea to guilty when they learned about the sentences. The Council believes the sentences and over \$10,000 in fines will send a strong signal to the artifact collecting community that illegal digging on sites (that is, without permission of landowner and notification to DNR) will be dealt with harshly in Georgia. Tom then discussed a few aspects of the case and asked the Council to decide on how the damage to the site should be repaired and what should be done with the artifacts and bone that were recovered. The motion was made and carried to rebury the human remains on the site, in one of the looter's pits, and to retain all artifacts (including the shell gorget) and animal bone in the curation facility at the University of Georgia. Tom will make the necessary arrangements and report to the Council. In further discussions, Tom Gresham and Dave Crass agreed to produce and distribute a "press release" about the case and its disposition.

Dr. Crass then discussed the DNR-commissioned reports on the assessment of the Etowah Museum building, site and collections. Architect Jack Pyburn prepared the report on structural issues and Michael Trinkley of the Chicora Foundation reported on collections management at Etowah and the Waring Lab curation facility at the University of West Georgia. Dr. Crass presented the Council with a one-page summation of the Chicora report (attached), which is more relevant to the Council and HPD. In essence, the report states that the staff is dedicated and knowledgeable, but there are many inadequacies with the care of materials due to the age of the structures, lack of institutional commitment and inadequate funding. Dr. Crass concluded that

the DNR and Commissioner Clark are aware of the issues and are exploring options for remedies that will include the DNR Preservation Lab at Panola Mountain. Dr. Crass said that, of course, the key issue is finding the financial resources to make the recommended improvements, which could entail new or substantially remodeled buildings. One step is to get greater recognition for the Etowah Site, perhaps through a designation as a World Heritage Site. After discussion the Council concluded that we need to learn more about the process for nominating a site for World Heritage designation.

Nealie McCormick then introduced Dennis Blanton, the Fernbank Museum of Natural History curator of Native American Archaeology, who reported on his recent work in the Big Bend region of central south Georgia. Mr. Blanton gave a fascinating illustrated presentation on a late prehistoric Indian site that has now produced about 15 European artifacts dating to the first half of the sixteenth century. Given the relatively large number of such artifacts in a non-burial context, Dennis is becoming increasingly convinced that this Indian site was visited by Hernando DeSoto in the spring of 1540. If so, the most recently accepted route of DeSoto in middle Georgia will need to be redrawn. The large Indian structure at the site is most likely some kind of a Council House. Dennis thanked the Indian Council for support of Fernbank's efforts and stated that he looks forward to future collaboration.

Nealie McCormick reported that he had spoken with Diane DeShazo of the Attorney General's office about tax free status for the Council. Ms. DeShazo will get back to the Council about this topic.

Regarding Rules and Regulations, Marilyn McGaughey reported that it will be expensive for the Council to hire an agency to conduct hearings for us and that perhaps we should reconsider holding them ourselves. However, the Council has neither the experience nor knowledge to conduct hearings. Nealie McCormick offered to check with other agencies to confirm costs of holding hearings. Marilyn agreed to call DNR attorney Emily Hitchcock to see if she can help with the specific wording of the Rules and Regulations regarding hearings.

Sarah Hill reported on communications to the Council via the web site. Most were routine and easily dealt with. One email requested a copy of *Frontiers in the Soil*. A representative of McGraw Hill Publishing requested that a Council member in the field of education check the accuracy of facts in its forthcoming Georgia social studies book (and perhaps other media). Sarah referred to Vonnie and Nealie McCormick an email from an agency in the Defense Department that advises agencies and entities about contracting opportunities. Linda Moyer submitted a report of last month's emails and telephone calls directly to DNR. All were generally routine and Linda referred each to a person or web site that could provide the requested information. JB Jones informed the Council that he was contacted by Carlene Hammond of Blue Ridge, who wanted to know if there were any Native American burials on a property that was being developed. We concluded that we do not have this type of information and could not help her.

Sarah Hill reported that GDOT archeologist Eric Duff shared with her a draft of a proposed DOT booklet on American Indian sites in Georgia. She stated that DOT will pursue completion and publication of the booklet in another year or so. Reminding the Council about our stated interest

in publishing such a booklet Sarah noted that the content of the DOT publication may not meet the Council's goal of providing general readers and visitors with a brief history of Georgia's Native Americans and the state's remaining Native sites. She will continue to pursue the initiative with Eric Duff and hopes the Council can produce a booklet in collaboration with DOT rather than in addition to the DOT publication.

Debbie Walsmith reported on the loan of Etowah's ceremonial axe to the Florida Museum of Natural History. The agreement was reviewed by the Muscogee Creek Nation in Oklahoma and has now been signed. The axe will be on loan until January 15, 2014, with an option (to be negotiated) for renewal for a traveling exhibit. The theme of the current exhibit is trade networks in the Southeast.

Tom Gresham reported that he and Sarah Hill had completed the Council's FY 2009 Annual Report to the Governor. Copies of the draft had been emailed to Council members, with no comments returned. Tom presented the final copy with a transmittal letter for Nealie McCormick to sign. Tom will mail the report and enclosure (a copy of *Frontiers in the Soil*) to the Governor and the other recipients. Tom will email the final version to all Council members.

Marilyn McGaughey led a discussion of budgeting and spending for the current FY 2010. She asked Council members to review the budget and think about what is important to the Council so that we can make some spending decisions next meeting.

Regarding money, JB Jones suggested that federal stimulus money might be available for projects such as the Etowah Museum. The Council questioned how to explore and implement such an initiative. JB stated that it should start at the local level, with motivated citizens and local politicians. JB agreed to pursue the possibilities.

In news items related to Native Americans, JB Jones mentioned a recent educational television program that suggested the pyramids in Egypt were not built by slaves. Marilyn McGaughey asked Sarah Hill to put notices of two upcoming lectures on Cherokee story telling and genealogy at Reinhardt College on our web site (Sarah had already done so). Sarah mentioned that we have a persistent lack of Indian news and stories from south Georgia to post, and requested help in remedying that situation. Marilyn McGaughey handed out copies of an AJC article about the expansion of foreign trade zones into middle Georgia, to help promote business and industry. Nealie McCormick said the census bureau continues to ask for the Council's help in identifying Indian groups in Georgia that might be under-represented in the census or help in identifying target populations that might be missed or undercounted. Nealie asked Sarah to put a notice on our web site with a link to the State census office.

On a motion from JB Jones, seconded by Sarah Hill, the current slate of officers (Nalie McCormick, chair; Marilyn McGaughey, vice-chair; Tom Gresham, secretary; and Ralph Crews, treasurer) was elected for a one year term.

Tom Gresham thanked Frankie Mewborn for bringing a box of the Council's brochures on artifact collecting, = "What's Legal and What's Not." Tom encouraged Council members to take copies for distribution to State historic sites and other venues where visitors can read them and

take them home. The Council urged Parks and Historic Sites to distribute most of the remaining copies to their parks, and Frankie agreed to do so.

Tom Gresham mentioned that the physical anthropologist used by the GBI and DNR law enforcement, Dr. MariaTeresa Tersigni-Tarrant, might be a good fit as the Council's physical anthropologist, to replace Karen Burns. Nealie McCormick asked Tom to contact her to see if she is interested in serving.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:05 p.m.

Visitors: David Crass, Ryan Kennedy, Dennis Blanton, Frankie Mewborn, Debbie Walsmith, Dana Russell, Vonnie McCormick, Frances Crews, Gisela Gresham, Ann Williams, Dan and Dola Davis.