

Council on American Indian Concerns

Regular Monthly Meeting, March 10, 2010
DNR Conference Room, Atlanta

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

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Nealie McCormick at 1:36 p.m. Ralph Crews led the opening prayer.

The February, 2010 meeting minutes, which had been emailed to members earlier, were approved as submitted.

The report for expenses to date was read by Treasurer Ralph Crews and was accepted.

New Business

Invited guest Barbara Williams of United Indian Development Association Business Services spoke to the Council about UIDA and how it could benefit Indians in Georgia. UIDA is a non-profit organization that is funded by the Department of Defense to assist Native American groups in competing for federal, especially DOD, contracts. She wanted the Council to know that a UIDA office exists in Georgia (Marietta) and that she and her office stand ready to provide assistance to Georgia tribes that want to obtain federal contracts.

Sarah Hill reported on her January meeting with Jeanne Cyriaque, coordinator for African-American programs at Georgia's Historic Preservation Division. Ms. Cyriaque was very helpful in providing an overview of the HPD African-American program and how it seeks to build coalitions of like minded groups. Sarah reflected that Georgia is poised to form similar coalitions to promote awareness and support of Native American sites, culture and needs. Sarah recommended that we invite Ms. Cyriaque to a meeting for further information about coalition building. Following Council agreement, Sarah will invite Ms. Cyriaque to a future meeting.

Ongoing Business

Regarding Rules and Regulations, Sarah Hill reported that our draft Rules and Regulations are now completed. She has prepared a transmittal letter to send the document to John Hennesley of the Georgia Attorney General's office for final approval. The letter also asks Mr. Hennesley to clarify procedures for administrative hearings and seeks information about the appropriate tax status for the Council so that we can keep funds in our account from year to year. Marilyn McGaughey reported that Judge Oakley agreed to hold administrative hearings for the Council at no cost for the first year and then determine with the Council whether charges would be appropriate in the future. Judge Oakley advised that we may not have many hearings because most people opt to settle rather than have a hearing.

Nealie McCormick reported that Governor's aide Emily Campbell advised him to email her stating that the Council's physical anthropologist Rick Snow now lives in Tennessee and needs to be replaced. The application for Maria Teresa Tersigni-Tarrant can then be processed.

Sarah Hill reported that she met with Georgia DOT archeologist Eric Duff and established an informal partnership with him to produce a handbook, and perhaps a brochure, for the general public on Georgia's Native American heritage. Sarah agreed to send Mr. Duff a rough draft that includes the data she considers essential. -

Sarah Hill reported that she completed the review of draft pages about Native Americans for McGraw-Hill's proposed Georgia social studies text book. Sarah believes teachers will benefit from a revised social studies text and any delivery of revised content in other media forms.

Historic Preservation Division archeologist Ryan Kennedy informed the Council on several ongoing HPD initiatives. First, HPD is aware that they are not as well focused on public education as they could be. Commissioner Clark strongly supports education projects and so HPD is working with the Wildlife Resources Division to create a short (3/4 hour) and long (2 day) program on Native American culture and issues. They are trying out prototype programs at Charlie Elliott Education Center near Social Circle and then will adjust and expand the program to more of DNR's education centers. They met with Creek Nation cultural resources manager Joyce Bear and are jointly planning the programs. They intend to target fourth graders. The Council agreed to have Sarah Hill serve as the Council's point of contact with HPD on this project. HPD is also studying the feasibility of getting Native Americans to help archeologists interpret a site as it is being excavated and studied. This "Project Archaeology" will focus on one particular site.

In a follow-up to Council discussions at the February meeting, invited guest Jim Langford led a discussion on how to best promote and preserve Etowah Mounds State Historic Site. In recapping events, Jim pointed out that DNR is rebounding and is doing a good job of managing the site under very trying (under budgeted) circumstances. Jim mentioned that the Coosawattee Foundation helped secure enough private funding to open the site for one additional week day, thus allowing most school groups to visit the site with adequate assistance and education from trained park personnel. As discussed in February, the Coosawattee Foundation wants to gather input from a wide range of groups who have an interest in the well being of Etowah in order to develop a vision and set of long term goals for the site. They especially want to gather input from Native Americans, and the discussion today will be the first of many such discussion and brainstorming sessions.

The Council expressed its great appreciation to Jim Langford for all that the Coosawattee Foundation has done to help Etowah Mounds Historic Site. The sentiment was formalized in a motion by Marilyn McGaughey, seconded by JB Jones, that reads "The Georgia Council on American Indian Concerns appreciates and endorses the Coosawattee Foundation initiative to study the future preservation and enhancement of the Etowah Mounds State Historic Site." The motion carried unanimously.

To guide the discussion, Jim outlined seven major categories of issues and concerns:

1. Resource protection and maintenance - protecting and enhancing the site itself
2. Role of the site - what should it be and do?
3. Facilities - once role is decided, what facilities will be needed? Should it be a large museum, have meeting rooms, curation space, living culture space?
4. Research - what more can or should be done? Should it become a research center?
5. Interpretation and education - should focus be on school kids, travelers, general public, archeologists? How much to do and how?
6. Financial sustainability - this underlies almost all of above and is key
7. Governance and management - is there an existing model that works better than current situation? Public-private partnerships?

The Council and DNR guests James Hamilton and Tim Banks then began an open ended discussion of these topics. Members expressed particular interest in future site management by a public-private partnership, a successful model at several other sites in Georgia including Warm Springs and Wormsloe Plantation. Additional ideas for the Etowah facility included a state-of-the-art interactive museum that is a model of environmental sustainability, a conservation and preservation lab, artifact storage facilities that can be readily viewed by visitors, a research library, a public meeting room appropriate for scholarly conferences, and a training facility for museum techniques. The Council noted the development of two new world-class museums near Etowah, the Booth Western Museum and the Tellus Natural History Museum. All agreed that Etowah can and should be their equal.

One topic carried over from the February meeting was the possibility of seeking World Heritage Site status for Etowah. Debbie Walsmith looked into this on behalf of the Council and reported that it is a very complicated process. A site must first get on the tentative list, and this list is currently closed. The Poverty Point site in Louisiana has been on the tentative list for about six years. The United States has not nominated a site in five years. When the question arose as why this is the case, Jim Langford offered to contact US Senator Johnny Isakson to find out why the process has been halted. Council members agreed that Etowah has the potential to be a major Native American cultural center and deserves to be so.

The Council next discussed budget issues, and particularly the FY 2010 budget. Nealie mentioned that he could ask Henry Flood to help us write some grant applications. Jim Langford stated that the Coosawattee Foundation has experience in grant writing and is able to assist the Council with grant applications. Marilyn McGaughey pointed out that state spending will be cut off in April, making it imperative for the Council to complete our spending decisions at our April meeting. No action was taken regarding future grant applications.

In news items related to Native Americans, Marilyn McGaughey announced that former Cherokee chief Wilma Mankiller has pancreatic cancer and is now spending time with her family. Nealie mentioned that a Michigan tribe will come to the Andersonville Prison Cemetery to perform a ceremony for seven of their members who died at Andersonville during the Civil War. It was announced that the US Department of Energy has a program to help tribes to produce power.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:10 p.m.

Visitors: Ryan Kennedy, James Hamilton, Tim Banks, Barbara Williams, Debbie Walsmith, Frances Crews, Gisela Gresham, Ann Williams, Dan and Dola Davis.