

Council on American Indian Concerns

Regular Monthly Meeting, August 11, 2010
DNR Conference Room, Atlanta

Council members in attendance: Tom Gresham, Ralph Crews, Sarah Hill, Bobby Tuggle, Royce McCrary and MariaTeresa Tersigni-Tarrant

In the absence of Chairman McCormick (attending the Governors' Interstate Indian Council meeting in Nevada) and Vice-Chair McGaughey (illness), the meeting was called to order by Secretary Gresham at 1:31 p.m. Ralph Crews led the opening prayer.

The June 2010 meeting minutes, which had been emailed to members earlier, were approved as submitted. In accordance with recent practice, there was no meeting in July.

The treasurers report, which had been emailed to members earlier, consisted of a year-end tally of expenses for FY2010. It was accepted.

Sarah Hill reported that there were two emails to the Council via our web site, one about an Indian conference in the Southwest and another about benefits for Indians.

New Business

Tom Gresham reported that Marilyn McGaughey had the idea of asking Fernbank Museum to explore including students from the three Georgia tribes in their ongoing archaeological investigations of Native American sites in Georgia. Marilyn submitted to the Council the emailed response she received from Fernbank's Native American Archaeology curator Dennis Blanton. Mr. Blanton agreed that this was a good idea that was worth further exploration between Fernbank and the Council. He then presented three suggestions for how this participation could be accomplished. One would be for students to enroll in the regularly scheduled summer excavations in south Georgia. Another would be to have students help with laboratory work at Fernbank in Atlanta. A third possibility would be for students to conduct independent study projects. Fernbank already works with high school and college students. Any of these programs would entail travel, lodging and meal costs, either to/in Atlanta or south Georgia. The Council agreed to discuss this further at a subsequent meeting.

In response to the Council's inquiry, Frankie Mewborn reported that the contract between the Office of Planning and Budget and the Department of Natural Resources for the funding of the Indian Council for FY2011 is being processed.

Tom Gresham reported that the Council received notification in mid-July from the Archaeology Section of the Historic Preservation Division that the University of Georgia archaeological field school had encountered Native American human remains (a skull) at their excavations on a Mississippian period site in Screven County. Tom said he spoke to project director Jared Wood,

who related that they had since found a few more fragments of human remains, and that all appear to be from secondary burials. They will continue to keep the HPD Archaeology Section and the Indian Council apprised of their findings. Tom mentioned that Dr. Wood was not familiar with the Council's written policies on dealing with Native American human remains, and so Tom said he would send him our February 8, 2006 policy statement. Sarah Hill pointed out that other university archaeologists probably are also not aware of our policies and that it should be sent to all archaeology departments working in Georgia. Tom said he would take care of this.

Ongoing Business

Sarah Hill reported that our proposed Rules and Regulations document has been approved, but there are still outstanding issues and work to be done. There was some discussion about whether Sherry Crew-Jay, of Parks and Historic Sites, would be able to help us with final formatting and subsequent steps. It seemed that she would not be able to help. Discussion then turned to whether it was worth continuing our efforts to get Rules and Regulations in place. It was observed that a great deal of time from many individuals (especially Sarah Hill) has been invested, and yet we seem to be no further along than we were six years ago. On a motion by Ralph Crews, seconded by MariaTeresa Tersigni-Tarrant, the Council voted to have Sarah Hill ask DNR attorney Emily Hitchcock about possible negative ramifications of abandoning the process. Sarah will report the results of this discussion at the next Council meeting.

Regarding the report of possible damage to Native American burial and occupation sites by the upgrading of a Georgia Power Company transmission line in Floyd County, Tom Gresham reported that the information the Council sent to Georgia Power archeologist Joey Charles a month ago had been returned due to an incomplete address. The information was sent out again and Mr. Charles confirmed earlier today that he had received the information and that per the Council's instructions, Georgia Power Company had hired a consultant to conduct archival research into the claims and to develop a plan of further work. The company will keep the Council informed on results.

Tom Gresham read a thank you letter the Council received from the Coosawattee Foundation for the Council's financial contribution to the teachers' workshop held in July at New Echota and Etowah Mounds. The letter also cites that Sarah Hill contributed substantially to the workshop. Sarah informed the Council that the organizers had prepared well for the workshop, and that all were disappointed by low attendance, which was prompted by a change in rules requiring teachers to attend such continuing education programs.

Tom Gresham reported that the two persons convicted of looting the archeological site in Burke County were continuing to pay their fines monthly. At the current rate, the payments would continue for about one more year.

At Marilyn McGaughey's suggestion, there was an open discussion about funding for Council operations and programs for the coming fiscal year. Sarah Hill opened the discussion by asking how we can judge and evaluate the effectiveness of public outreach programs. It was generally

recognized that students would continue to be a focus of our outreach, and that much of this could come through the school system. MariaTeresa Tersigni-Tarrant suggested that we could create a short overview of Native American culture for school teachers in an easily accessible, electronic format, perhaps providing images, bullet points and a body of information. This could be placed on the Council's web site. This raised a question about the amount of traffic on the web site. Sarah Hill said she would ask web master Michael Chadwick to give us a report on our web site for the next meeting. Discussion shifted to public events where Native American culture is on display, such as a festival at the Capitol in November in connection with Native American Month and the Georgia National Fair in October in Perry.

Debbie Walsmith updated the Council on recent discussions within the Parks and Historic Sites Division about Indian-themed historic sites and the development of Red Top Mountain lodge as a curation and laboratory facility. Debbie cited a number of visitation and revenue figures for the past two years at New Echota, Chief Vann House, Etowah Mounds and Kolomoki Mounds historic sites, most of which show declines that correspond to the reduction in operating hours due to budget constraints. Because of special local support that allow it to be open an extra day, figures for Etowah dropped less than for the other parks. Also, since Kolomoki is also a park with camping and other activities, revenue has not dropped there.

Debbie also stated that DNR contracted for Conservation, Assessment and Preservation (CAP) studies for New Echota, the Vann House and the Dahlonega Gold Museum, but these reports are not ready for distribution. She could say that they found generally inadequate maintenance and housekeeping at all three.

MariaTeresa Tersigni-Tarrant reported on the meeting she and Marilyn McGaughey had with Commissioner Chris Clark, Director Becky Kelly and State Archaeologist Dave Crass about the conversion of the Red Top Mountain lodge to a DNR curation/lab facility. She said they were intent on making the transformation, as they believed it would be a vast improvement over the current facilities. She said they believed it would not compete with Etowah Mounds. Debbie Walsmith added some details about the conversion, saying that she and Frankie had prepared floor plans for the lab and curation areas. The conversion would occur over a period of years as funding allowed. She said \$1,000,000 had been allocated for this year and work would first focus on the lodge and a curation space that would use moveable shelving. She said there is a desire within DNR to have hands-on activities and display space in the facility.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:02 p.m.

Visitors: Debbie Walsmith, Dan and Dola Davis, Frances Crews, Gisela Gresham