



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Virginia Council on Indians

P. O. Box 1475, Richmond, VA 23218

L. Preston Bryant, Jr.
Secretary of Natural Resources

William F. (Frank) Adams
Chair

Virginia Council on Indians Meeting April 17, 2007

Present: Chair Frank Adams (Upper Mattaponi), Reggie Stewart (Chickahominy), Gerald Stewart (Eastern Chickahominy), Frank Richardson (Rappahannock), Mitchell Bush (Onondaga, Indian At Large), Ben Adams (Upper Mattaponi, Indian At Large), Paige Archer (Meherrin, Indian At Large), Sherry Munford (Sappony, Indian At Large), Carole Nash (Citizen At Large), Deanna Beacham (Weapemeoc, Council Program Specialist)

Absent: Juanita Smith (Nansemond), Reggie Tupponce Sr. (Upper Mattaponi, Indian At Large), Donald McEachin (Delegate), Chris Peace (Delegate), Harvey Morgan (Delegate), Ryan McDougle (Senator)

Attendees: Chief Gene Adkins (Eastern Chickahominy), Karenne Wood (Monacan), Roger Archer (Meherrin), Kenneth Munford (Sappony), Gerri Reynolds (Rappahannock), Lynette Allston (Nottoway of Virginia), Allard Allston, Archie Elliott (Nottoway of Virginia); Verde Halley (Cherokee/Tigua)

Call to Order:

1. The meeting was called to order at approximately 6:05 PM, and the commencement prayer was given by Gerald Stewart

Administrative Business:

1. Following introductions, the first order of business was the approval of the minutes from January 16, 2007. Following a motion by Gerald Stewart and a second by Frank Richardson, the minutes were unanimously approved.

Old Business:

1. The first item of old business was a request by the Nottoway Indian Tribe of Virginia (petitioners for state recognition) to address the Council, which was granted. Lynette Allston read the Council a letter which expressed their concerns about the slow progress of the recognition process to date. A complete copy of this letter as well as the group's suggestions for improving the process are appended to these minutes. Following the Nottoway presentation, council and subcommittee member Frank Richardson spoke about the time conflicts hindering the committee members during this time with assurances that there was no deliberate delay, but that this was an extremely busy time for the Virginia tribal members.

2. Chair Frank Adams then addressed concerns regarding the Nottoway recognition subcommittee. He said that two of the previous members of the subcommittee had resigned: Delegate Chris Peace and council member Reggie Tupponce, who had chaired the subcommittee. Their letters of resignation were distributed to the Council members. The Chair then appointed two new members to the subcommittee: council member Mitchell Bush, and Chief Gene Adkins of the Eastern Chickahominy. Both have previous experience with the recognition process. The Chair asked that the subcommittee schedule a meeting within three to five weeks. He stated that he hoped these efforts would address some of the group's concerns. Council member Carole Nash volunteered her services, and the Chair asked that she be considered as an advisor to the subcommittee along with Helen Rountree.

3. Next the Chair gave a brief review of the March VCI conference, which all agreed had been a very good and rewarding event. The Program Specialist reported that approximately 180 people attended the Friday dinner, and about 85 shared lunch on Saturday. It appeared the Council stayed within their budget for the event, although not all expenses and revenues were yet reflected on the VCI budget documents. The Chair offered his thanks to all the committee who worked on the conference, and commended them for their hard work and excellent results. He asked that anyone with comments or suggestions about the conference that might help for future events planning send an email to that effect, and those comments would be collected for the next conference. The hotel has already asked if the VCI was interested in reserving the third weekend of March 2008 for the next event. After considering the schedule for next year, the Council agreed by consensus to schedule the 2008 conference for the Friday night of March 14 and Saturday March 15.

Because of the excellent service the VCI has received from the hotel, council member Frank Richardson proposed sending them a letter of appreciation as well as a plaque they could put on the wall, and the Council agreed. Mr. Richardson will circulate proposed language for the plaque, and the Chair will circulate a draft letter of appreciation. The Program Specialist will also write to the North Carolina Commission on Indian Affairs to let them know of the conference date.

4. The Program Specialist then called the members' attention to the budget report documents for the past two months, which in their packets. As previously stated, not all the conference expenses and revenues were yet reflected. The Chair asked that any members who had questions about the budget please contact the VCI office.

5. The next item on the agenda was brief review of Senate Bill 1136, regarding the membership of the Council, as amended by the Governor and passed by both houses, which would go into effect July 1.

6. The last item of old business was a review of the Virginia Indian Heritage Trail materials for the booklet, which must go to the printers soon. Karenne Wood, as director of the project, had previously distributed the documents for review. The Sappony had objected to the booklet's lack of inclusion of a separate page of history and information on their tribe. These concerns were expressed at a meeting held at Secretary Bryant's office which the Chair and Ms. Wood attended. Karenne said she did not have the authority to decide on this question, so she told the chiefs about the meeting and the Sappony position. She received responses from them that only the eight Virginia state-recognized tribes should have individual pages in the Heritage Trail booklet. As a compromise solution, she incorporated material from the Sappony's submitted page into the overall Virginia Indian history and tribal sections, along with a separate vignette about the tribe's historical figure Bearskin. She had distributed this material to the VCI members. Sherry Munford registered her disapproval of the compromise solution for the booklet

on the grounds that it did not include a separate page for the Sappony. Other council members agreed with the compromises made. After some discussion on the topic, council member Gerald Stewart moved that the Council should approve the materials as submitted, but there was no second. After further discussion, council member Frank Richardson moved that the Council should approve the materials as submitted with the addition of sites recommended by the Sappony as being accurate about their tribe. This motion was seconded by Paige Archer. The Chair called for a roll call vote, and the votes were as follows: R. Stewart – yes, G. Stewart – yes, Paige Archer – yes, Carole Nash – yes, Sherry Munford – no, Mitchell Bush – yes, Frank Richardson – yes, Chair Frank Adams – abstain. The motion to approve carried 6-1.

New Business:

1. The sole item of new business was a letter received by the VCI from Cynthia Brown, a member of the organization called the Cheroenhaka Nottoway Tribe of Southampton County, which the Chair read to the Council. The letter had concerns and suggestions about the VCI conference, and requested a written reply. The Council members agreed by consensus that a letter of response should be prepared to the letter's author, saying that her suggestions and comments would be passed on to the volunteer committee that will be working on the next VCI conference.

Announcements:

1. The next VCI business meeting will be May 15 at 6 PM in room 7 West of the GAB.
2. April 24, 2007, 9 AM. . First Landing State Park, Virginia Beach. First Landing ceremony, tribal leaders invited. Ticket required. Information is available on the First Landing website at http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks/fir.shtml.
3. April 28, 2007. Virginia Beach Boardwalk History Festival. 17th Street Stage. The Nansemond tribe will host a mini-powwow.
4. May 5-6. VITAL powwow at Chickahominy tribal grounds. See www.vitalva.org.
5. May 11-13, 2007: America's Anniversary Weekend, J2007 Signature Event. Jamestown. Virginia Indian dance performance and craft presentations. Ken Custalow, flute making, Mildred Moore, pottery and George Whitewolf, leather craft. Chief Steve Adkins will be a speaker on May 12 at the launching of the John Smith shallop's recreation voyage of the Chesapeake. See www.americas400thanniversary.org.
6. May 12-13. AIS Mother's Day powwow in Ruther Glen, Virginia.
7. May 18-20. Monacan Powwow in Elon, Virginia.
8. Events for dates past May 18 will be announced in the meeting agenda for the May 15 meeting or by email via the VCI office.

Adjournment:

The move to adjourn was made by Reggie Stewart with a second by Gerald Stewart, and was unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:35 PM.

April 17, 2007

*Lynette Allston, Tribal Council Chairman, Nottoway Indian Tribe of Virginia, Inc.
Commentary (Outline) presented at the meeting of the Virginia Council on Indians*

Introduction

Chairman Adams, Members of the VCI
My comments this evening are directed toward the Petition Process.

As a brief recap – At the October 17, 2006 meeting six month ago, the Nottoway Indian Tribe of Virginia presented a Petition for State Tribal Recognition.

The petition Review Committee was named at the November VCI meeting.

On January 16, 2007, the Review Committee met for organizational purposes.

That was the last meeting of the Panel. On February 20th, we appeared for the scheduled meeting. Those present were unable to proceed, due to the lack of a quorum. Two panel members were ill including the chairman.

The March 16th, 2007 meeting was officially cancelled by email on the morning of the scheduled session. This meeting too was cancelled simply due to the lack of a quorum.

Process

In reading the criteria, as part of the Review Process, there are guidelines that require specific operational directives.

1. Under Step 3, *Procedure for Petitioning, Recognition Committee*
"After ninety (90) days from the start of the evaluation process, the petitioning group may request a meeting with the Committee to discuss the progress of their petition".

At this time, to request a meeting would be pointless since it appears to us that there has been little if any progress.

2. Also in Step 3 of the Petitioning Process under Recognition Committee, it should be noted that

"The members of the Review Panel are to sign a conflict of interest statement to the effect that he or she will not serve in a recognition case if he or she has a bias for or against the petitioning organization."

Perception

Some say that perception is reality. If you put yourselves in our places and look at how the review process has been handled, what would you think?

1. The perception is that the VCI process for Tribal Recognition has stalled.

Our expectation as the Petitioning Tribe is that the process will be fair and move forward in an efficient manner.

While we understand that people get sick and people have lives with other priorities, our expectation is that the courteous way to interact with people is an apology for the cancellations, and timely adjustments to the process.

Only two VCI members have expressed an apology for the delay in the process.

The process has not been treated with the seriousness that the guidelines imply.

We understand that everyone on the Review Committee is a Volunteer.

But the expectation as a Volunteer is that you take your role on the VCI and on the Review Committee as seriously as you take your real job.

2. Another perception is that the Virginia Recognized Tribes find the Federal recognition process to be bureaucratic, yet the Virginia recognition process holds fast to a bureaucratic standard. There is an irony in the similarity of the situations.

The petition presented by the Nottoway Indian tribe of Virginia is in accordance to the Petition Guidelines to include six (6) copies of original documents and genealogical information.

When we look at the original petitions presented by the Recognized Tribes, prior to their being State recognized, there appears to be a different standard. (Nottoway Indian Tribe of Virginia, Inc. presented a recognition petition in a large binder while the Virginia Recognized Tribes presented recognition documents of a few pages)

Is Appearance Reality?

Progression

Where will the process go from here?

Rather than dwell on these perceptions, the positive thing to do is to move forward.

For your consideration, we have a few suggestions for refocusing your VCI Recognition process –

1. Have a “new beginning” meeting within three weeks and at that meeting, allow us to give an overview to explain the petition section by section. This is a chance for the panel to ask questions and for us to address any areas that are unclear.

Have a time commitment of the Recognition Committee members to set aside four hours for the next meeting to establish a comprehensive beginning for the review process.

2. Chairman, Mr. Tupponce, before his illness, set a timeline. However the process stalled.

Once again, it would help the process for the Recognition Committee to establish a schedule for meetings and a timeline toward providing a Recommendation, by June 2007.

3. To make the Commonwealth aware of the status at the Recognition Process, a letter from the VCI informing the Governor of the current status of the process, we feel, would be appropriate.

Conclusion

We have been patient because we have the first petition under the new guidelines, but we can not be complacent and sit in quiet satisfaction with a process that does not proceed efficiently with mutual respect. Patience is a virtue, complacency is unforgivable.

One of the consultants to the Recognition Committee said that we were hypersensitive. Well maybe we are. We feel like we are the forgotten.

At the VCI Conference in March, I mentioned we are the forgotten ones to one of the VCI members. His comment to me was that we were all forgotten.

It is doubly distressful to be pushed aside by other Native people. This is how we feel. This is our reality.

The VCI has a monumental task because our perception is that the VCI was intended to represent all of the Native People of Virginia – Recognized and Unrecognized.

We all know that the history of the Virginia Indians is complicated. Most of us were not lucky enough to have anthropologists assist us in reorganizing in the early 1900's, even though the Nottoway people like other isolated native communities were documented at that time.

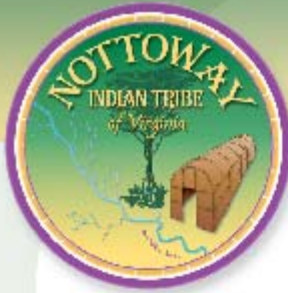
We are trying to catch-up. We are depending upon the compassion of the current VCI to understand this dilemma and have a broader perspective.

A letter with a synopsis of these points is prepared for your records and we look to you to do what's right.

With the passing of recent legislation, this version of the VCI has three months left in determining its final act – its legacy. Will it be to represent the broader Virginia Indian community or only a closed Indian Society?

The choice is yours.

Thank you



NOTTOWAY INDIAN TRIBE OF VIRGINIA, INC.

April 17, 2007

Mr. Frank Adams
Chairman, Virginia Council on Indians (VCI)
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

Chairman Adams,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before the Virginia Council on Indians meeting this evening. As stated in our presentation tonight, the present status of the Tribal Recognition Petition Review process has generated concern, confusion and distress.

The positive intentions generated during the January organizational meeting of the Tribal Recognition Petition Review Panel dissipated with the late cancellations of both the February and March Panel meetings.

To positively refocus the direction of the process, we suggest that -

1. A comprehensive and focused meeting be convened, within three weeks, allowing us to give an overview of our documentation, and to explain our petition section by section. This is a chance for the panel to ask questions and for us to address any areas that are unclear. A time commitment of several hours will provide a comprehensive beginning for the review process.
2. The current VCI establish a schedule for meetings and a firm timeline toward providing a Recommendation.
3. The current VCI, consistent with the 90 day "status" provisions of your published Recognition Process, should make the Commonwealth aware of the status of our Recognition Petition, by submitting a letter to the Governor of the Commonwealth, indicating how existing Petitions (The Nottoway Indian Tribe of Virginia, Inc. is the sole Petition under review) are being handled. This is particularly appropriate since a restructured VCI will take office in July 2007. Existing Petitioners should not be harmed by circumstances we did not create.

Should you need any additional information, you may contact me directly at the email address and phone number below. The official tribal address and email are also listed on the letterhead.

Respectfully,

Lynette Allston
Chairperson, Nottoway Indian Tribe of Virginia, Inc.
(434) 658-4454 allstonfam@aol.com

cc: The Honorable L. Louise Lucas, Virginia State Senator (via US Mail)
The Honorable Roslyn C. Tyler, Virginia House of Delegates (via US Mail)

TRIBAL CONTACT:

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