NEVADA INDIAN COMMISSION
BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Monday, August 8, 2016 - 10:00am
Nevada Indian Commission Office, 5500 Snyder Ave., Carson City, NV 89701

Commissioners Present:
Richard Arnold, Chairman
John Hansen, Vice-Chairman
Marla McDade Williams, Commissioner
Dan Carpenter, Commissioner

Staff Present:
Sherry L. Rupert, Executive Director
Chris Gibbons, Program Officer I
Denise M. Becker, Administrative Assistant III

Guests Present:
Daryl Crawford, Executive Director, Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada
Ismarty Valentin, General Public
Warren Cartwright, Intake and Program Specialist, Nevada Urban Indians, Inc.
Robert Tilton, President, Pyramid Lake Veterans and Warriors Association
Larry Burton, Photographer

I. Convene Meeting & Roll Call
Chairman Arnold convened the meeting at 10:00 am and asked Sherry to take roll. Four Commissioners were present, establishing a quorum.

II. Invocation
Daryl Crawford provided the invocation.

III. Welcome and Introductions
Chairman Arnold asked all those present to introduce themselves and thanked everyone for attending.

IV. Initial Public Comment
There was no initial public comment.

V. Approval of March 24, 2016 and May 25, 2016 Meeting Minutes
Vice-Chairman Hansen noted that his name was incorrect on the minutes. Sherry noted the edit and will correct the minutes before the final approved version is posted to the website.

A motion was made by Commissioner Hansen to approve both sets of meeting minutes, seconded by Commissioner Carpenter. The motion carried with a vote of 4 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions (1 absent).

VI. Commissioner Reports and Announcements
Commissioner Hansen commended Tribal leadership, tribal members and the emergency response team at the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe (PLPT) during their recent fire at Sutcliffe. He also mentioned that Truckee Bob approached Honor Flight Nevada to coordinate the first “All Native” Honor Flight in November. They have agreed to this and now they need to get this information out to tribal leadership so they can get more response.
They need to get at least 50 veterans on that flight and it will be the first time that they include the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) on the tour.

Sherry noted that Honor Flight Nevada is looking for older veterans to go, but she wanted to know if younger veterans also had the opportunity to attend.

Commissioner Hansen said that they are trying to get the oldest and sickest first. Mr. Tilton said they were asked by Honor Flight Nevada to put together 50 applications for a flight for all native veterans. This flight is for Native veterans of Northern Nevada and limited to native veterans only. It costs roughly $2,000 per person to go to Washington D.C. and to the memorials for the one day event. Families are notified and meet the attendees at the airport upon their return. This be televised and will be a fun thing for them. The veterans also receive letters from children. Mr. Tilton has been asked to be the lead to collect the applications as they are quite personal. They are also looking for sponsors that may want to pay for an individual to attend. It is open to all age groups and all branches of service.

Chairman Arnold asked about southern Nevada native veterans. Mr. Tilton confirmed that there is also a Southern Nevada Honor Flight, and explained that Southwest Airlines sponsors the trip and they are focusing on veterans from Northern Nevada for this particular flight. Chairman Arnold said that they could try to get an aircraft grade seal/sticker for the airplane. They may be able to get this donated to stick on the jet. This would take a lot of coordination with Southwest Airlines. Commissioner Hansen has a contact at Southwest Airlines that donates his time to fly the plane for the Honor Flight.

Sherry asked if there was any charge to veterans to participate. Mr. Tilton explained that there is no charge for veterans; this is done strictly by donations. They are targeting November, Native American Heritage Month for this flight and have about 30 native veteran applications so far.

Daryl mentioned that the Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada has sent the information out through the Statewide Native American Coalition. They did have some Washoe veterans that were interested and they were referred to the Honor Flight website.

Chairman Arnold mentioned that the Bi-State Traditional Ecological Knowledge Summit went well and he was encouraged by the participation.

VII. Approval of Executive Director Report as Presented by Sherry L. Rupert, Executive Director, Nevada Indian Commission

Sherry went through the end of FY 16 financial reports with the Commissioners, reporting that there were minimal funds that were unused and reverting back to the General Fund. Sherry also reported that the Commission Gift Account has funds that were raised throughout the year to cover costs relating to the Stewart Indian School Trail and the Stewart Indian School Cultural Center.

Sherry invited the Commissioners to attend the August 24, 2016 State Public Works Board in support of the Commission’s Capital Improvement Project (CIP) request. The request is for construction dollars to complete the Stewart Indian School Cultural Center and the Welcome and Information Center. The meeting will begin at 9:00am.

In regard to sponsorships for the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) Convention, Chairman Arnold suggested looking at the Secretary of State’s listing of native-owned businesses in Nevada.

Chairman Arnold mentioned that there are books for towns across the United States. He can find this information as he thinks this could be done for Stewart. This could be done to sell in a gift shop and to get the word out about the Stewart Indian School.
A motion was made by Commissioner Hansen to approve the Executive Director report as presented, seconded by Commissioner Williams. The motion carried with a vote of 4 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions (1 absent).

VIII. Presentation and Discussion on Veterans Service Officers on Tribal Lands – Robert Tilton, President, Pyramid Lake Veterans and Warriors Association

Mr. Tilton introduced himself and said that he represents an all native veterans group and is a member of the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe (PLPT). The veterans have some issues and he has been requested by his spiritual advisors to approach the Commission on the position of the Nevada Indian Commission. Some of his advisors are Ralph Burns, Gridley Hilpert, Louis Lincoln and Bill Wadsworth; they are on his board. He explained that healthcare and benefits for veterans are a critical issue for them as the suicide rate is extremely high amongst native veterans (greater than 50%). He also explained that in this past year, there has been a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) proposed that when a veteran goes to a tribal health clinic, they will no longer be referred out to private doctors, they will be required to seek health service at the VA. As vets, they are covered under the Veteran’s Administration (VA) for benefits. Veterans are now being turned away from their tribal health clinic and have to go to the VA. The veterans elect not to go to the VA because of the poor healthcare they receive there. The Reno Sparks Indian Colony is considering this and their administration is upset about this. Veterans want to be able to choose their care. The Indian Health Service (IHS) benefits because they don’t have to spend as much money for contract services, the VA makes out because they get more numbers (qualifying for additional funding) and the clinics make money from the VA as they get reimbursed at the Medicare rate. The only ones that suffer are the veterans. He wanted to know the NIC’s position on this issue.

Another issue that has come up is that the native veterans want to represent themselves when applying for health and disability benefits as Veteran Service Officers (VSO’s). VSO’s are trained by the VA to complete the forms and help veterans navigate the system to get their benefits. They have run into constant problems on the reservations; the native veterans don’t want to leave the reservations and when they do go to the VA they are lost and don’t know how to fill out the forms. The VA wants the veteran numbers to be able to report, but they don’t always follow up with the veteran for their benefits. In one instance, a native veteran had an appeal and rather than the VA physician examining the veteran, he called the veteran and asked him how he was doing, the veteran said, “good” and his benefits were disallowed based on that telephone conversation. They want their own VSO’s; a member of their tribe trained to help them. He does not believe that a casual phone conversation should change a veteran’s benefits. The state is looking at legislation that would provide for tribal VSO’s, but that they be state employees. Mr. Tilton has been made aware that the state sent out a memo internally asking employees to anticipate what the tribes would ask. Tribes have until September 19th to make comment on proposed legislation. The native veterans don’t want the VSO’s as state employees, they want tribal VSO’s. Mr. Tilton stated that the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe is opposed to state VSO’s as they feel a tribal VSO would fight harder for their native veterans than any state representative. Mr. Tilton stated that he has come to the NIC for two reasons: to see if the NIC has been informed of these items and what action will be taken and to see if the NIC is in support of these items.

Commissioner Carpenter commented that he is very familiar with this subject as he is an eye and facial surgeon and sees many veterans in his office. He agrees that this isn’t right for them to tell veterans what care they should use. Commissioner Carpenter wants to help. The individual has a sovereign right to choose his care and not be told by some bureaucrat what care they need. The veterans are treated like a number at the VA; they don’t care.

Mr. Tilton doesn’t understand why the VSO’s would be through the state, their relationship has been through the federal government, the VA. PLPT Tribal Council has asked Mr. Tilton to represent the tribe.

Sherry asked Mr. Tilton to clarify that when he says “state” that he is talking about the State Department of Veterans Services. He confirmed that he was referring to the State Department of Veterans Services. Commissioner Hansen disclosed that he currently works for the Department of Veterans Services.
Commissioner Hansen commented that the VA doesn’t know how to talk to native veterans, they talk too high level. Mr. Hilton said that even though the VA doesn’t know much about the native culture, they are willing to work with the tribes. They don’t want to go through a middleman (the state). Native veterans want to be able to go direct to the VA; the people that have the authority to make decisions.

Sherry asked if each tribe were to have a VSO, who would fund that? Mr. Tilton stated that these positions would most likely be part time and would probably have to be grants, unless the Governor would fund a VSO for the tribes, but not be a state employee.

Chairman Arnold thanked Mr. Tilton for bringing these issues forward so the NIC is aware of the needs. He also stated that the NIC is investigatory by nature and needs to figure out a path forward. He also advised that the NIC would need a request in writing. Asking the Governor to fund positions that would not be state employees, when the Governor’s authority lies within the State of Nevada is unlikely. As a federal agency, the VA has a trust responsibility to the tribes, so self-governance funds may be an opportunity. We are challenged by September deadlines. If the various veterans’ organizations could all contribute to meet the native needs. He also mentioned that it seems there should be a resolution from the tribe for a VSO.

Mr. Tilton said that his tribe is taking those steps. He was asked to check with the NIC to see if they would be opposing the NIC on these issues.

Sherry suggested that she could speak with the State Director of Veterans Services, Kat Miller on this issue. She believes that Director Miller believes she is helping the tribal communities by hiring VSO’s.

Commissioner Hansen suggested that the VA should be helping tribes to identify federal funding for the tribes to hire their own VSO’s.

Chairman Arnold asked Sherry if the NIC could appoint a committee to work on these issues. Sherry said that it could be done if that is what the Board would like.

Commissioner Williams said that she thought that it would be appropriate as the NIC acts as a liaison between the agencies. It is the NIC’s role to make some inquiries and in the end support a path.

Commissioner Carpenter said nothing will get changed unless there is a specific resolution by the tribes stating that they want the choice to use the VA or not use the VA.

Mr. Tilton said the PLPT is not signing the MOU, but two tribes have already signed. The PLPT does not want a state VSO. The gal that the state has now is not “Indian friendly” and they would rather work directly with the VA.

Commissioner Williams commented that the role of the NIC is not with the federal agencies, the role is with the state government. The NIC can inform the tribes about the benefits or lack of benefits to the tribes to help people understand the issues.

Chairman Arnold suggested that the NIC may need to have a meeting and gather the facts. The NIC needs something from the PLPT beyond the verbal presentation today. Mr. Tilton clarified that he is not yet representing the PLPT, but the PLPT Veteran’s and Warrior’s Association. He is seeking approval to represent the tribe on these issues at their next meeting.

Daryl Crawford mentioned that the Health Directors meet through ITCN with the State of Nevada. Tribal health clinic workers are trying to stretch the health services dollar, and they are always looking for ways to recapture dollars. Mr. Crawford shared the Department of Health and Human Services Tribal Liaisons listing with the group. Daryl will bring these issues up at their meeting this Thursday. Daryl suggested that this is the time to change the MOU to include the items that the tribes want to see. It may be a good idea to find out if reimbursements for services (from the VA) could be used for services to veterans.
Commissioner Williams motioned to have staff make some initial inquiries on what is proposed for VSO’s by Director Miller, and inquiries on which agency is directing the MOU’s. Staff is to report back to the Commission prior to the next meeting with any recommendations on what the NIC’s role should be and have discussions with the other veterans committees. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Carpenter. The motion carried with a vote of 4 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions (1 absent).

Chairman Arnold recommended that this be an update in the director’s report for the next meeting.


Sherry made the report on behalf of the planning committee. She reported that there were about 200 in attendance at the Summit and Chairman Arnold not only attended, but was a presenter. The pine nut trees were a primary topic for attendees. The planning committee had met for over a year planning the summit. There was a good mix of attendees from Nevada and California tribes, state and federal agencies, and interested individuals. Everyone liked having the summit at Stewart. One highlight was the youth panel; they had hard questions, but were able to answer them. The federal agencies were engaged in the planning and also attended.

Chairman Arnold mentioned that this all began with testimony from the presentation that was given here at the Commission. This is an example of some of the things that the NIC can do. Chairman Arnold agreed that a follow up summit could be more targeted in nature.

Sherry further commented that this is just the beginning of discussions with the federal agencies. The “Next Steps” meeting will take place in Lee Vining, CA on August 10, 2016 beginning at 11:00am. Sherry continues to report findings and plans to the Bi-State Executive Oversight Committee.

Daryl Crawford from the Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada asked how many tribal leaders were in attendance. Sherry responded that there were just a handful of leaders that attended.

Chairman Arnold commented that it would have been nice to have more tribal leaders, but it was well attended with representatives from both Nevada and California.

A 10 minute break was taken at this time.

X. Report on Indian Territory Projects and Activities – Chris Gibbons, Secretary/Treasurer, Indian Territory

Chris made the report on behalf of the Indian Territory. The report can be found on the NIC website at www.nic.nv.gov. There were no questions from the Commission.

XI. Discussion on Nevada’s Strategic Planning Framework and the Nevada Indian Commission Strategic Plan

Sherry asked the Commissioners to take a look at the Nevada’s Strategic Planning Framework in their meeting packets. She explained that this is the first time that the State of Nevada has developed a statewide strategic plan. She informed the Commissioners that the Stewart Indian School Living Legacy is listed as a priority. All state agencies are now required to have strategic plans in place by the end of Fiscal Year 2017. Sherry mentioned that she has spoken with tribal leaders on how they would like to have input into the NIC’s strategic plan. They would like to review once the plan has been drafted. Sherry asked the Board if they would like to have a strategic planning session or if they would like her to draft the strategic plan and then make recommendations on the draft.

Chairman Arnold stated that it may be more productive to draft a plan and get it out to tribal leaders and Commissioners for their input. This will be on the next agenda for discussion.
XII. Indian Education

A. Written Report on Current Indian Education Program Activities

Sherry explained that Fredina Drye-Romero submitted three documents for her report. Sherry was available to answer any questions on the written report.

Commissioner Williams said there appeared to be two items that are being worked on; Cultural Competency Module for Indian Education and the Social Studies Standards Revision as it relates to multicultural education. At some time she would like details of what they are considering and thought that the NIC might support the items with a resolution. There should be some presentation to this body to make sure these are going in the right direction. She would like to better understand these items.

Daryl asked if Fredina brought up the Cultural Competency Module to the Indian Education Advisory Committee (IEAC). Sherry was unsure and let the Commission know that Fredina sits on these committees and reports back to the IEAC, much like the report she is providing here to the NIC.

Commissioner Williams stated that she is having a hard time understanding what the Indian Education Advisory Committee is doing. She thought that having meeting minutes would be helpful. Sherry will provide the Indian Education Advisory Committee Meeting minutes with the next board packet.

Commissioner Williams motioned to approve the Nevada Department of Education, Indian Education Program Professional’s report and the IEAC reports as written, seconded by Commissioner Hansen. The motion carried with a vote of 4 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions (1 absent).

XIII. Stewart Indian School

A. Approval of Appointment of Representative Form for the Stewart Advisory Committee

Sherry explained that there was one Appointment of Representative form for Bonnie Thompson that had been submitted for approval. Miss Thompson is requesting reappointment for a second term.

Commissioner Hansen motioned to approve the Appointment of Representative form for Bonnie Thompson to the Stewart Advisory Committee Meeting, seconded by Commissioner Williams. The motion carried with a vote of 4 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions (1 absent).

B. Approval of Report on Stewart History and Preservation Project as Presented by Chris Gibbons, Program Officer, Nevada Indian Commission

Chris made the report on behalf of the Stewart History and Preservation Project. The report can be found on the NIC website at www.nic.nv.gov.

Daryl inquired on restoration of the old Stewart football field. Chris replied that the Stewart Landscape Preservation Plan identified the old track and field for relocating the powwow grounds, restrooms, and bleachers. Youth in the city are also looking for additional fields for sports. Chris commented that it would be great to see the track and field restored.

Commissioner Carpenter motioned to approve the Stewart History and Preservation Project report as presented and submitted by Chris Ann Gibbons, seconded by Commissioner Williams. The motion carried with a vote of 4 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions (1 absent).
C. Report on 2016 Stewart Father’s Day Powwow

Sherry highlighted the partnership with Community Cars of Carson City for the powwow. They gave a refurbished car to a native family in need of a vehicle at this year’s powwow. She also went over a comparison of the powwow from 2005 to present to identify what areas of the powwow have shown growth and what areas could use improvement. The planning committee has decided to add two additional taco vendors to next year’s event due to overwhelming demand. The silent auction continues to be a significant fundraiser for the powwow as does the powwow program. Proceeds from the powwow are split in half; half going to the NIC gift fund and the other half remaining as startup funds for the next powwow.

Commissioner Hansen motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Williams. The motion carried with a vote of 4 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions (1 absent).

XIV. Agenda Items for Future Meetings

Suggestions for future agenda items included: strategic plan, veterans update, budget and meeting minutes.

Commissioner Williams stated that she would like to go back to a discussion on tourism development and marijuana. She would like to understand what tourism development is, so she can be a better advocate and can talk with legislators as an informed person. She also recently received a call from a constituent on commercial pine nut picking and whether or not there is something the NIC can do on that issue.

Chairman Arnold mentioned that this was also brought up at the TEK Summit.

Sherry confirmed that this issue was indeed brought up at the TEK Summit. Mr. William Dunkelberger, Forest Supervisor for the Humboldt-Toiyabe Forest was in attendance and heard the concerns of the group. The next day he came back and announced a moratorium on the issuance of commercial pine nut picking permits across the Humboldt-Toiyabe Forest. She has been made aware that there is commercial pine nut picking on BLM lands. In fact, the applications are due today. There needs to be more work done on explaining the difference between U.S. Forest Service (U.S. Department of Agriculture) and BLM (U.S. Department of the Interior). There may be an opportunity to discuss with BLM the opportunity to replicate how the U.S. Forest Service is handling commercial pine nut picking permits. Sherry mentioned that this particular issue is outside of the Bi-State and the TEK group will need to decide whether they will tackle issues outside the Bi-State or focus efforts within the Bi-State.

Any other requests for agenda items can be forwarded to Sherry.

XV. Scheduling and Location of Next NIC Meeting

The next Nevada Indian Commission Board Meeting was scheduled for November 9, 2016 from 9:00am-1:00pm.

XVI. Final Public Comment

Daryl Crawford welcomed and congratulated the NIC’s new board members and said that he is happy to support the Commission’s efforts.

XVII. Adjournment

Commissioner Hansen motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Carpenter. The motion carried with a vote of 4 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions (1 absent). Meeting was adjourned at 12:50 pm.
CERTIFICATION

It is hereby certified that these Meeting Minutes were approved at a meeting of the Nevada Indian Commission with a vote of 3 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions, 0 absent, at a meeting duly held on November 21, 2016.

Certified by:

Sherry L. Rupert, Executive Director
Nevada Indian Commission