

# State Tribal Economic Development Commission

*Conference Call*

March 7, 2016

~~DRAFT-Approved~~ Meeting Minutes

## **Commissioners Present:**

Shawn Real Bird (Chairperson) Richard Sangrey, Gerald Gray, Harry Barnes, Shelly Fyant, Jason Smith

## **Staff Present:**

Casey Winn Lozar, Margaret Cook, Heather Sobrepena-George, Philip Belangie

## **Welcome/Purpose of Gathering:**

Meeting started at 1:15 PM introduction and welcoming of new Commissioners and alternates.

## **Approval of October Minutes and Actions Thereon:**

**Motion:** Commissioner Barnes motioned to accept the October 2015 meeting minutes as presented. Seconded by Commissioner Gray. All in favor. Motion passes unanimously.

## **Office of Native American Development Reports:**

Casey Lozar reported on the Indian Country Programs situated in the Business Development Division, which houses a host of programming. Casey expressed his appreciation to the ICP team noting that the last 8 months have been the most successful in the program's history. The new programs are also providing an opportunity to identify new ideas for Indian Country. Casey also introduced the new STEDC Program Manager, Margaret Cook, with a brief outline of her career and expressed his appreciation to Heather Sobrepena-George's leadership in promoting programs for Indian Country. He also highlighted the media articles about the success of economic development programs between State of Montana and Indian Tribes. Articles have appeared in the Tribal Business Journal (<http://tribalbusinessjournal.com/>), Federal Reserve Bank (<https://www.minneapolisfed.org/indiancountry/resources/cicd-blog/montana-invests-to-help-native-american-businesses-thrive>). Casey also reported on panel participation on economic development in Indian Country for Senator Tester. These are all good opportunities for additional technical and financial resources for Tribes.

**STED Commission:** Heather Sobrepena-George reported on the use of webinars for application processing as well as NABA consultations and other trainings. Heather also introduced Margaret Cook as the Program Manager for the STED Commission and the recent tour of all the tribes in Montana to meet the STED Commissioners as well as the MILP staff.

**Montana Indian Language Preservation Pilot Program:** Casey Lozar gave a brief historical update of the program and requested the STED Commissioners to remind tribal language programs to submit their

quarterly reports that are due on April 1<sup>st</sup>. Margaret Cook gave an update on the recent tour of all the programs and an update on progress of the language programs.

**Indian Country Economic Development:** Heather Sobrepena-George report on the Indian Country Business Planning grants. She has received applications from each of the tribes and has notified 4 applications that have provided successful applications that were reviewed on February 11, 2016; the remaining 4 applications are requiring additional information. Deadline for Indian Equity grants are open to At-large applicants until April 30, 2016, NABA grants are completed. Heather reported that all fiscal year 2017 funding for Indian Country programs will be set-up and ready for operations by July 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Native American Collateral Support (NACS Program):** Casey Lozar reported that the entire team of the Indian Country Programs has been involved in meeting with Tribal leaders, tribal planning departments, financial institutions and the NABAs throughout Indian Country to promote the NACS program. This is a \$500,000 collateral support fund and the priority is to have all funds deployed by the end of the year. Philip Belangie is taking applications and managing this program and he reported the need to spend down this fund. To date we have two loans including \$65,000 for Glacier Bank in Polson and \$100,000 in Wolf Point for the purchase of a business. We are requesting STED Commissioners to promote NACS for Native American businesses.

**Indian Equity Fund:** Philip Belangie reported the increase of this program from \$14K to \$40k for each tribe. There has been an increase in support to NABAs for assistance to the IEF grant applications, loan packaging for business advisors training, Association of Accredited Small Business Consultants (AASBC) certification, inclusive entrepreneurship, electronic application and review process. So far Philip has received 44 applications (consistent with past application). The "at large" applications close on April 30, 2016. Philip reported that the Indian Equity Fund program is getting better and NABA responsiveness is great to the IEF applicants.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

### **Upcoming Events:**

- ***Governor's Conference on Tourism***, April 10-12, 2016, Kalispell, MT. Update by Heather Sobrepena-George on participation of Tribal Tour operators and other tribal participants. Scholarships have been provided to tribal governments. Tribes have been gaining exposure to tourism in Montana.
- ***NATIVE (or Native American Tourism and Improving Visitor Experience) ACT*** (H.R. 3477) update. Commissioner Harry Barnes reported he is going to Governor's Conference and will be supporting this Act. He reported that it has passed out of sub-committee and is through Tester's Committee and waiting for where it goes next. A letter of support was provided to AIANTA and to Senator Schatz, sponsor of the NATIVE Act.
- ***AIANTA Conference***, September 11-25, 2016, Tulalip Washington. Heather Sobrepena-George reported that this is a good conference for Tribal Tour

operators. AIANTA is working on National Parks Policy for working with tribes. Heather recommended representation at the conference by the STED Commission which would give a good perspective on what other tribes and tribal tour operators are doing. Heather will keep the Commission posted on conference details.

- ***“Invest in Success” Conference***, March 15-16, 2016 at MSU Northern, Havre, MT. Philip Belangie reported that it would be appropriate for SBDC Directors attend. In addition he is recommending that the NABA’s attend by financial support from STEDC. There will be several listening sessions including credit reporting that would be useful for the NABA’s working with tribes.

**Motion:** Commissioner Barnes made a motion for the STED Commission to sponsor the NABAs to attend the “Invest in Success” conference. Seconded by Commissioner Sangrey. No discussion. All in favor. Motion passes.

- **Governor’s Tribal Leadership Conference**, May 10-12, 2016, Helena MT  
**Heather** Sobrepena-George reported that the STEDC may participate and plan a STED Commission meeting in the afternoon of May 10<sup>th</sup>. In addition the STED Commission may wish to host Tribal Leaders at a reception on the evening of May 10<sup>th</sup>. On May 11<sup>th</sup> in the afternoon the STEDC and Tribal Leaders will meet to present tribal economic issues for consideration prior to the next Legislative Session and Budget discussions.

**Motion:** Commissioner Sangrey made a motion for the STED Commission to host a Tribal Leaders reception at a cost not to exceed \$2,000. Seconded by Commissioner Grey. No discussion. All in favor. Motion passes.

**Other Business:** A short discussion on participation to the National Center for American Indian Enterprise, Reservation Economic Summit (RES) conference ensued. The commission may want to consider budgeting for attendance at this conference next fiscal year. Commissioner Real Bird requested a follow-up on how to move forward with the agreement to recognize tribal LLC’s. State of Montana tribes need to work together to create an agreement with the Secretary of State. Commissioner Barnes reported that he would like to forward concerns to the Senate Committee for broadband internet availability to all tribes. This is a challenge for economic development for tribes. Commissioner Real Bird agrees that each tribe should own their fiber optic lines and educate that tribes can work together to own and operate their own broadband internet systems.

### **Adjourn**

**Motion:** A motion was made by Commissioner Real Bird and seconded by Commissioner Graey to adjourn the meeting. No discussion. All in favor. Motion passes. Meeting ended at 2:45 PM.