

State Tribal Economic Development Commission

Conference Call

October 28, 2020

Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present:

Shawn Real Bird (Chairperson), Richard Sangrey (Vice-Chair), Shelly Fyant, Cheryl Reevis, Merlin Sioux, Jestin Dupree, Gerald Gray, Tara Rice, Jason Smith and Ken Fichtler

Staff Present:

Maria Valandra, Wayne Johnston, Billie LeDeau, Dan Iverson and Jessica Blumberg

Welcome/Purpose of Gathering:

Roll call and quorum established. Meeting started at 10:13 AM.

Non-agenda Items Comments:

None

Approval of 8/5/2020 Conference Call Minutes Actions Thereon:

Motion: Commissioner Richard Sangrey motioned to accept the minutes as presented.

Seconded by: Commissioner Gerald Gray. Motion carries.

OICED Program Reports:

Maria Valandra reported that the department received a record number of Indian Equity Fund applications, 130 in total. The Local Review Team is scoring the applications before the State Review Team makes their recommendations to the Director. Total funding for each tribe is \$40,000.

The Office of Indian Country Economic Development has created a survey that will be sent to previous IEF recipients asking about the challenges/opportunities for their business. Questions include - when did they receive the grant, how did it start, how did it help them, are they still in business, have their revenues expanded or decreased? A similar survey will be sent to previous Tribal Business Planning grant recipients.

Chair Real Bird congratulated Maria, Billie and the Montana Department of Commerce in the success of the Indian Equity Fund grant program. The program is helping break down barriers and more Indian entrepreneurs are realizing their dreams. He would like to see it receive state and national attention.

Vice-chair Sangrey questioned if TBPG dollars are not used by a tribe, can the dollars go into the IEF pool of funding. Maria responded that if a tribe has no need for a feasibility study, yes, the funds can be reallocated to the Indian Equity Fund program.

Tribal Tourism Update:

Dan Iverson reported that tribal tourism planning shifted over the course of the summer 2020. The State runs the summer season campaign from March to September and then transitions into our winter season campaign from October to January of each year. We were only 10 days into the warm season when the World Health Organization declared a pandemic. In May, Commerce launched the Worth the Wait Interim Campaign then transitioned into Safety Messaging. The Montana Aware Campaign was developed with a marketing agency using Cares Act really funding focuses on reminding visitors to your community to be safe.

Dan presented a Powerpoint on the tribal tourism budget. The state collects two forms of lodging, facility tax from guests, hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts, guest branches, resorts and campgrounds. Tax collections has declined for the first time in more than 10 years due to the pandemic.

The lodging facilities use tax collections are also how our tourism programs are funded in the State including tribal tourism. All tribal marketing campaign contracts were cancelled with very minimal impact on the budget. A new budget is in the early stages of being drafted and will focus more on the development of assets rather than marketing.

A recurring conference call with tourism partners from each tribe is being set up to start sharing something best practices among one another.

OLD BUSINESS

Billie LeDeau reminded Commission member that several Commissioner terms have expired. Tribal chairs will receive a letter from Governor Bullock soliciting nominations.

Proposals are being received for the State Tribal Economic Development Commission Strategic Planning session. The Commissioners were polled if an in-person session is desired over a virtual session with the consensus that an in-person would be preferred. Currently, the Department of Commerce has a moratorium on employee travel which includes our Commission members to attend in-person meetings and need to take that into consideration. Whether in-person or virtual, the dates of the session are to be determined but will be scheduled after the legislative session and before the end of the 2021 fiscal year.

Billie reported that the Montana Indian Language Rotunda day and the MILP Language Summit that coincides with the Legislative Session are being postponed indefinitely due to Covid restrictions enacted by the Montana Department of Administration.

NEW BUSINESS

Legislative Update: Wayne Johnston informed Commissioners that the Department of Commerce's number one priority is to remove one-time only funding of OICED programs and to secure permanent funding. The department may ask tribes for letters of support in favor of a bill.

Montana Tribal Planners Group: Maria Valandra formed an informal collaborative group of tribal planners to share information, grant possibilities, learn more about each tribes' projects and to learn best practices from each other. The calls are held roughly every two months.

Vice-chair Sangrey expressed the need to honor "retiring" Commissioners or staff for their service to the State Tribal Economic Development Commission. Commissioners were urged to send Billie an email with any names or ideas of recognition.

Motion made by Commissioner Shelly Fyant to Adjourn. Seconded by Commissioner Richard Sangrey. Motion carried.