



AIANEA National Council Teleconference Minutes

Wednesday, June 21, 2017

Respect, Harmony and Beauty

Council Members & Guests Attending:

President

Dr. Carol, Crouch, Oklahoma

1st Vice President

Kirt Peterson, Colorado

Secretary

Melissa Sturdivant, Texas

East Regional Representative

Cassius Spears, Rhode Island

West Region Representative

Susan Looper, Nevada

South Central Region Representative

Derek Kelso, Oklahoma

Guests Attending

None

Past Presidents Attending

Gina Kerzman, Washington

Athena Cholas, New Mexico

Meeting Minutes:

- a. Meeting was called to order at 12:05 pm by Dr. Carol Crouch, President.
- b. Welcome, introductions & roll call
A roll call of those in attendance was taken by Carol and Melissa. At the beginning of the teleconference, a quorum was available with Past President Gina Kerzman in attendance.
- c. Treasurer Report
Facilitator: Dr. Carol Crouch
Pam Crow nor Bill Parrish were on the conference call. Carol stated that she had received financial reports from April, May and June.
Motion to approve the financial reports for April, May and June.
1st motion: Derek Kelso
2nd motion: Kirt Peterson
With no objections, the financial reports were accepted and recorded as presented.
- d. Minutes for Review
Facilitator: Dr. Carol Crouch
Carol asked if everyone reviewed the minutes distributed by Melissa. With there being no changes noted in the minutes, a motion was made to approve the April and May minutes as presented.
1st motion: Derek Kelso
2nd motion: Kirt Peterson
With no objections, the minutes were accepted and recorded as presented.
- e. National AIAN SEPM Report
Facilitator: Deborah Clairmont, NAIANSEPM
Deborah was not able to be on the teleconference, but Carol relayed information which Deborah had forwarded to her.

FY17 AIAN Heritage Month Poster

1. Title: "Big Water of Life"
2. Theme: "Water is the Essential Element" (Ockeechobee means 'Big Water' in the Seminole Language). Contest ended June 15 for artists to submit their artwork.
3. Hopes to have the posters distributed to all states by the end of September.

f. National Tribal Liaison Officer Report

Facilitator: Barry Hamilton, National Tribal Liaison Officer

Barry was not able to be on the teleconference, but Carol relayed that Barry will send her an email of what work has been underway.

g. Regional Representatives' Reports

Facilitator: Dr. Carol Crouch & Regional Representatives

1. South Central Region Representative, Derek Kelso

Derek highlighted a few items that are being planned in Oklahoma, but provided the following information via email.

Recruitment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCN Tribal College • Choctaw Nation Youth Summit 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choctaw Nation Soil Health Seminar Durant, Ok • Wyandotte Nation Environmental Festival 	June 27 June 30
Upcoming Events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seminole Nation USDA programs workshop • Sac & Fox Nation Summer Festival • Choctaw Nation CSP & USDA Programs workshop • Cheyenne & Arapaho Soil Health workshop – Phase III • Cherokee NRCS Application & FSA Eligibility Workshop • Choctaw Nation Soil Health Training Phase III • 5th Annual 2017 USDA Leadership and Nation to Nation Tribal Consultation Meeting 	August 15 July 6 July 27 August 9 August 2 August 10 August 21-22
Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oklahoma is working with the Choctaw Nation to develop a Tribal Conservation District • NRCS named in top 50 places to work in the Winds of Change Magazine – AISES 	

2. West Region Representative, Susan Looper

Susan indicated that she did not have anything to report for this time period.

3. East Region Representative, Cassius Spears

Cassius indicated that he did not have anything at present. He will send notes to include in the minutes.

h. Committee Updates

Facilitator: Dr. Carol Crouch & Committee Chairs

1. One item that Carol wanted to discuss was the need to continue or not continue to include committee reports from committees which may not be working right now. For example, Carol asked about the Visioning Committee and the Cookbook Committees which were brought up for discussion.

Melissa reported that the Cookbook Committee was originally an ad hoc committee to begin with and indicated that work for that committee has been completed. She continued that any work required now would be need-based at this point, so she felt that requiring a report each month was no longer needed. Melissa confirmed that the Cookbook Committee could be removed from the agenda for National Council work and meetings.

Gina commented on the work accomplished by the Visioning Committee and that in 2008 they developed a Strategic Plan or a Visioning document that provided direction for the Association.

Gina added that the committee has not been active since the last national training, as it has been difficult to find someone to Chair that effort. Gina asked that we wait before we dissolve that committee, but Carol clarified that she wondered if it needs to be on the agenda each month. Gina stated we need to find someone to lead this work.

2. Carol indicated that there has been a lot of discussions regarding the scholarship committee and questions posed regarding our IRS filing status, and our paperwork to support our 501(c)3 status. Carol stated that she has been encouraged and received feedback from past presidents that we really need to rely on the Audit Committee to be ensuring that we are functioning properly and within our purview as a 501(c)3, as they are the committee which monitors our internal structure and compliance.

Carol reported that Pam has provided the documentation per Code 1954 that the AIANEA is in good standing and has submitted what is needed by the IRS for our 501(c)3 status.

Carol asked for a motion from the Council for the AIANEA Audit Committee to report to the National Council and verify that we are in compliance with what is needed to operate as a 501(c)3 and that we have filed our documentation as needed accordingly. Carol wants confirmation and verification of our compliance with what is required for us. Carol also wants to ensure that we are not in violation in regard to recent questions that have arisen that we should be collecting taxes based on the cookbook sales.

Discussions followed.

Melissa commented that she felt that we are going to need some help with this because as a member of the Audit Committee, this is not a large group, and Pam serves as an *ex officio* member basically because she is the treasurer. Melissa went on to share that the members have consisted of herself (Melissa), Elder Ted, and Veronica O'Donnell, and Garry Stephens. But, Garry hasn't been involved since his retirement. Veronica nor Elder Ted were able to be at the last audit. Melissa reported she was the only one there to review the financial documents. Melissa added that this was only the informal audit of the financial records that is required.

Carol reiterated that we can just reach out to the Audit Committee and have them do this verification process. Melissa shared that she does not feel comfortable making those determinations as she is not a CPA and all the Audit Committee did was basically balance the ledger with the bank statements, and no other verifications were done with the committee.

Carol mentioned that the second item that was slated for discussion was the need to seek consultation with an outside CPA for guidance. Gina stated that the Bylaws which were amended in 2010 is when the Audit Committee function was introduced to ensure that there was another set of eyes to look at the financials to ensure we are in compliance. We need a checks and balances system, and this is why the Audit Committee was created. Gina added that Bill Parrish was a second treasurer and was receiving a set of statements to verify the accounts and purchases. Carol said that this was still operating in this manner. Gina commented that we need to consider Melissa's comments and consider seeking the consultation with the CPA before we move forward.

Carol suggested that she send an email to the Audit Committee via Pam and ask that the Audit Committee evaluate these questions and report back to the National Council. Gina confirmed that as the Bylaws stipulate, the Audit Committee was to be doing this informal audit on the off years in which a formal audit was completed by an external CPA. Gina added that we are overdue for an external audit and as Melissa shared, this will tell us if we are overlooking anything.

Carol commented that after researching the Bylaws and speaking with Past Presidents, we really need to re-think a re-write of the Bylaws as so many things are obsolete. There are many explicit items in the Bylaws that restrict what we are doing, and things which were needed in years past are no longer applicable and should be removed.

Carol asked for a motion that we move forward and consider a re-write of the Bylaws. Gina commented that there is a Bylaws Committee, and there are several things that need to be

addressed. Kirt commented on the availability and excitement for people to be involved, and it seems to have diminished over the past few years. Carol commented that a lot of things dwindled when we were no longer able to have training conferences.

Susan commented that as part of a committee, she feels that her and the committee's work was slighted and dismissed. She feels that there is little room for contribution when good ideas are dismissed. Susan went on to share that she feels discouraged because when you work hard, and have your work dismissed, you lose faith in what you're doing and why you are involved. Carol agreed that some people are reluctant for change but when comments are made, they are just feedback. Discussions followed. Susan feels that the conversation needs to be going on with the committees and on the Council and should not be outside the National Council. Discussions followed. Carol extended her appreciation to Susan for her comments and apologized for any miscommunications. All reiterated this and extended apologies for miscommunications.

Kirt commented that he values Gina's comments and feels that we need to have that voice and involvement as we move forward. Kirt is concerned that if we start more committees, we are setting ourselves up for the same problems. We need to encourage our Past Presidents to be involved so that we have that frame of reference moving forward. Susan commented that the cornerstone of any organization are the Bylaws and these are our cornerstone as well, and she feels that we need to get these in order before we move forward. Carol agreed, and stated that having the Bylaws in order gives our Committees the strength that they need in order to support the Association.

Gina commented that she agrees with Kirt's observations about including the older, tenured members in these processes. Gina continued and stated that each time we get a new National Council, we go through these same growing pains and it feels like we are starting over each year. We need new members, but we also need to include our older members so we don't forget. Kirt added that hearing Gina's comments is better than getting 70 emails explaining the same thing. This involvement is important and it is a mentoring process. Melissa added that this is important and we need these voices, but everyone needs to be involved in the process. She commented about the frustration of trying to get things done on the scholarship process when the tenured folks would not contribute after repeated pleas to help with the process and make decisions. Melissa added that at the committee level, we couldn't get committee work accomplished. Everyone agreed that we need to find a focus to help us re-energize our Association.

Motion as made to have a Bylaws Committee come together and start this review. Susan commented that it is better to have several people involved and reviewing this. Carol suggested that we just need to pause and step back and look hard at the Bylaws and determine what is needed and what is not before we go any further. Carol suggested that we start with this and then have the National Council review the changes and make decisions from there. Carol offered that we should ask the past presidents to help in the review process so that we have that historical perspective, but then we will be able to fine tune it to what is needed in today's structure.

Carol asked if someone on the National Council will volunteer to start the review process. Susan motioned that we take a first step to purge the areas of the Bylaws that are determined to be not necessary in our Association right now, and this be the first step. Once this is done, then each Council member commits to help with the final review. Carol asked for other comments. Gina offered some discussion first. Gina suggested that we need someone to lead this and champion this effort or otherwise it cannot get done. Her example included Tanya and the *Elders in the 21st Century* book and Melissa's work leading the AIANEA Cookbook, and with those champions, the work was completed or is getting done. Gina suggested that the 2nd Vice President is usually participating in this, but someone needs to lead this effort. Gina further stated that the one who leads this can do the preliminary reviews and gather the information and bring it before the Bylaws Committee and then the National Council. When asked by Carol, Gina felt that she was unable to take this on at this time, but could help look at pieces and help with the review. Kirt agreed but felt that since Cameron was not on the call, we could not commit him to this task. Kirt added that we can table this for right now unless someone wants to start the process. Carol asked if someone

can start the process or do we need to schedule another teleconference. Discussions followed. Susan voiced concerns that we need to agree to disagree, but agree that each person brings a voice to the process, and each perspective is important. Melissa offered to go through the first-read review, hi-light the areas that need to be removed or are no longer relevant, and forward this to the National Council. All agreed that this would be a great first step and then we can go from there with the editing process.

- i. Carol asked that we make a decision on the national training and our partnership with APIO and WiN in 2019. Motion to approve our partnership with these professional employee associations to conduct a national training in Washington state.

1st motion: Susan Looper

2nd motion: Gina Kerzman

With no objections, the decision to partner with APIO and WiN was made and recorded as presented.

- j. Carol asked for an affirmation from the National Council to accept Susan Looper and Melissa Sturdivant as Chair and Co-Chair, respectively, for the Scholarship Committee.

1st motion: Kirt Perterson

2nd motion: Athena Cholas

With no objections, Susan Looper and Melissa Sturdivant received a vote of affirmation from the National Council to provide leadership to the AIANEA Scholarship Committee as presented.

Discussions followed about adding new committee members to the Scholarship Committee. Carol shared that David isn't able to serve on the Scholarship Committee and asked if we need to replace him with someone from the Southeast region. Discussions followed and all felt that this can wait until the Bylaws are revised. However, Athena is welcome to participate in the Scholarship Committee, and no vote is needed to select a committee member.

- k. Other items slated for discussion were tabled pending a review of the Bylaws.
- l. Carol asked the Council for their input and recommendations regarding the fact that we did not award scholarships in 2016 and would not be awarding them in 2017. As Carol discussed this, she shared that the as the Bylaws are currently written, it stipulates that scholarships will be awarded each year. Gina asked for clarification. Carol asked if we will have awards in 2017 or do we need to note this in the minutes. Melissa commented that she feels confident that we can get the scholarships awarded in 2017 if the scholarship committee can complete their work.

Gina recommended that we note something in the minutes that a scholarship was not awarded in 2016 because it needs to be recorded somewhere. Melissa offered that we could record the following action: the AIANEA National Council refrained from awarding a scholarship in 2016 pending restructure of the scholarship program. Future awards of the AIANEA scholarships are pending the development of the AIANEA scholarship program policy and appropriate forms. All agreed that this was acceptable and made note of the committee work and disposition of the scholarships.

Discussions followed regarding recent scholarship committee work. Carol mentioned that we are going to need different criteria for each of the scholarships. Melissa added that the last word she heard was that Judy did not want any restrictions regarding award of scholarships using the Harold Bryant Scholarship funds. Judy had asked that any student in need to have an opportunity to apply. Melissa agreed that we will need different criteria for each of those scholarship awards. Susan and Melissa suggested that this be tabled for the Scholarship Committee to work and then let the National Council review.

Carol discussed the need to have in place a Travel Scholarship Fund to support our AIANEA Elders. Time restraints and life happens and we need to have the ability to allow our treasurer the have authorization to provide funds to our Elders when the need arises for an Elder to travel on behalf of AIANEA business. Susan asked how travel is handled with the RTCACs. Susan asked about a budget framework for the year. Gina asked if Tanya can draft some criteria for the National Council to review.

Action Item: Carol will get in touch with Tanya about developing a framework for an Elder's Travel Scholarship.

- m. Carol asked about the Awards Committee and if an existing budget exists for this. Gina clarified that the criteria exists for each of the award areas. Athena added that in the past, Millie had asked for specific amounts for the awards in a given year, but there was no line item on the budget. Athena recommended that we should have a spreadsheet that supports what the overhead expenses are to conduct business, and what the costs are throughout the year. Discussions followed. Carol recommended that when we get our Committees straight, then we can get the annual costs to do business for each of the Committees.
- n. Carol asked about the network solutions, but no one was sure what is going on with the work. Athena shared that it is supposed to re-direct URL traffic from the AIANEA.com address to the AIANEA.org address, but this is not happening correctly.
Action Item: Carol will follow-up with Steve Durgin to see where we are on this transition.
- o. Adjourn – Carol extended her appreciation to those members and guests attending and with no further business, she adjourned the Council meeting at 1:40 pm, Central. Next scheduled meetings are planned for July 19 at noon, Central.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Melissa Sturdivant, AIANEA National Council Secretary. Please respond to melissa.sturdivant@tx.usda.gov with questions or comments.