



# AIANEA National Council Teleconference Minutes

Monday, July 18, 2016

11:00 pm Pacific, 12:00 pm Mountain, 1:00 pm Central, 2:00 pm Eastern

*Respect, Harmony and Beauty*

## **Council Members & Guests Attending:**

### **President**

*Athena Cholas, New Mexico*

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President**

*Kirt Peterson, Colorado*

### **Secretary**

*Melissa Sturdivant, Texas*

### **Guests Attending:**

*None*

### **Midwest Regional Representative**

*Debe Walchuk, Minnesota*

### **Southeast Regional Representative**

*Debbie Henry, Georgia*

*attending for David Elliott, Alabama*

### **Northeast Regional Representative**

*Cassius Spears, Rhode Island*

### **Past President Attending:**

*Steve Durgin, Washington, DC*

*Tanya Meyer-Didriksen, Iowa*

*Millie Titla, Arizona*

## **Meeting Minutes:**

- The meeting was called to order at 1:05 pm (Central) by Athena Cholas.
- Athena took roll call of those attending the meeting.
- Athena asked for additional items to the agenda, and reviewed what would be addressed during this meeting, which includes:

*Approval of awards*

*Support for our Elders*

*Employee Resources Day*

*Training with SAIGE*

*Central Region replacement*

*Other issues*

- Tanya provided an update for the Elder's Committee. Tanya indicated that with recent retirements of employees, we have some gaps with reps serving as Liaisons with our Elders. Tanya reported that she is looking for assistance working with Elders Joe Joaquin and Loretta Metoxen. Loretta might have someone but we are awaiting supervisor approval.

In regard to the work on-going with the *Elders in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* book, Ciro will continue to work on the project. Charlotte Pyle continues to work on the book project. Tanya thinks that some folks may need a break just after retiring, but hopes to keep them involved. Tanya reported that some of our employees are not able to provide the level of support they want because of job duties and details, and/or personal issues such as family or personal illnesses. She admits that there are some gaps occurring as a result of retirements and some of this occurs because we do not have good contact information for them once they retire. Tanya commented that with Garry Stephens' retirement, it transitioned well with Melissa now working as Elder Ted's committee Liaison.

Athena asked if there is something the National Council can do to provide some support to the Elders and the committee. Tanya expressed that it never hurts to include the Elders and the committee members. Tanya stated that she has a great line of communication with the committee and keeps them involved and regular

communication. Discussions followed. Tanya welcomed support and any help from the National Council.

Athena commented that she hopes that we can get the webpage up and going, and feels that we are stagnant and need to be more current. Athena also commented that she is glad that the Facebook page is active, but admitted she needs more help with the e-newsletter and getting that information out in a timely manner.

Tanya stated that she will make sure to remind all the members and make sure they are aware of the Facebook page. Athena shared that this is a great means to get some information out to the public as the page is regularly trafficked. Athena invited the Elders to share stories or quotes and these can be posted on the Facebook page, too.

Athena suggested that we need to communicate with the State Conservationists as a means to highlight the work with the Elders and all that they have contributed to the AIANEA and NRCS with projects like the cookbook, WEWAI trainings, and the projects currently underway. Athena feels that we need to have regular communication with the STCs to communicate what is going on and to demonstrate the need for employee involvement on these respective committees and the Association. Athena suggested that for those states which are more conscious of diversity and outreach and have these as state goals, that this might be a means to involve the AIANEA at the state level. Athena also commented that by sending them a report on a periodic basis, we fulfill our commitment to keep them informed of what we have accomplished, which will further communicate the value of the employees' organization and our employees being involved and the benefit to the Agency. Steve suggested that when she prepares correspondence to the respective STCs that she include the Regional Conservationists as well.

Millie offered to Tanya to see if she knows of someone who might serve as a representative to Elder Joaquin.

Athena asked for an affirmation for Tanya to continue serving as the Chair of the Elders Committee.

*Motion:* Millie Titla

*2<sup>nd</sup> Motion:* Debe Walchuk

*All voted in favor and with no votes opposed, Tanya will continue to serve as the Chair for the Elders Committee.*

- e. Athena commented that Pam used her personal credit card to pay the six-month renewal fee for the webpage domain name. Athena suggested that we consider authorizing payment of regular business-related expenditures so we do not have to come to the Council each time a purchase is needed to conduct business. Discussions followed regarding obtaining a credit card for the Association.

Motion to reimburse Pam \$161.33 to pay the fee for the webpage.

*Motion:* Debe Walchuk

*2<sup>nd</sup> Motion:* Kirt Peterson

*All voted in favor to authorize the reimbursement of \$ 161.33 to Pam for purchase of the webpage domain name.*

Athena also discussed that we need to make a decision about whether we want to change our domain name from a ".com" to another such as ".org" or ".net." Steve stated that we already have both the ".com" and ".org" for our web domain name. Even though we don't use both, we have paid for both. Discussions followed.

- f. Athena discussed that we need to make some decisions about the awards. Millie stated that two notices have been distributed. Discussions followed. Millie distributed the guidelines for the award nominations with the committee working on the determinations. Athena distributed this information. Discussions followed regarding extending the time period for accepting nominations. Cassius recommended that we extend the time period to accept nominations. The President's Awards being awarded are for 2015 and these are based on nominations from former president Steve Durgin. The 2016 President's Award was coordinated by Athena with that being the gifting of the Pendleton blanket to Anna Perales. Millie discussed the issues surrounding award of a group award and recommends that this be tabled until the committee has time to develop the criteria for this category as nothing is in place at present. The guidelines need to be developed. Millie agrees that we should extend the deadline to August. Debe agrees and supports extending the deadline. Athena feels that we should also find a means to recognize those who are nominated for an award but not selected. Possibly we could write an article or news release to recognize their efforts. Millie will get in touch with Yvette to forward the information about the extended time to submit nominations.
- g. Debe asked about minutes and if they need to be approved before we lose our quorum. Athena stated that Melissa will send the minutes out for review and we can vote on them that way. Athena mentioned that she has not received committee reports recently and she will get in touch with chairs to gather that information. Athena discussed the financial reports and the need for more information. Discussions followed.

- h. Athena reported that she had contacted SAIGE to indicate our interest (the Association) in partnering with them to conduct our annual training/conference. There was some interest from SAIGE leadership in partnering especially with us working with the natural resources track for the breakout sessions and helping to coordinate the speakers. The Association would not incur the overhead expenses typically done so when we host a national training and conference. Athena asked Millie if she could help in Arizona and let leadership know that SAIGE would be occurring there. It would be great to have NRCS well-represented in attendance and as speakers. Athena also talked with SAIGE about adding a poster session to the agenda and thought this would be great to have NRCS involved in this area, too. Athena commented that our awards process would have to occur sooner to ensure that we could award them at the conference in June if we do partner with SAIGE.

Millie talked about the USDA Forum which is typically conducted the day before the SAIGE conference, and USDA is usually a supporter of this event, and already involved with the planning. Athena suggested that if we can start early, we might get involved in this event and help with it.

Tanya discussed the logistics of the budget and how our national training/conference has always taken care of Elders travel. Tanya asked about how this will be affected with the Elders travel and attendance at the SAIGE conference. Discussions followed. Athena commented that the Association could incur this expense or we could find donors to pay for this expense, if needed. Melissa shared that Herb had been in touch with her and Elder Ted about Elder Ted participating at the SAIGE conference as a speaker. Athena would like for us to have a master calendar of events of all AIAN-related activities and outside organization, and if our Elders are attending.

Athena added that Steve continues to work with NEDC to get the training approved as a national training, and he is working on the content and training matrix. Steve added that he had received a request from NEDC for copies of presentations and for the content delivered during the last session held in Alabama, and he is working to gather that information.

- i. Athena commented on a diversity and outreach day planned at the Ft Worth Center and how they had asked for our participation recently. Athena asked Melissa to comment on the event as she had been trying to find people to attend. Melissa shared that Herb had contacted her as they are both members of SAIGE and asked if she could attend. Melissa added that they initially were asking about a presentation or booth related to SAIGE, but she told them about our Association and also they could contact the AIAN SEPM at the Ft Worth Center. Melissa was not able to be at the event as it was short notice, but Melissa stated that she had forwarded the information to our Association members in the northern part of Texas to see if anyone was available to attend. Unfortunately, because of the short notice, no one was able to be at the event.

Athena recommends that we invest in developing materials to have available to be able to do outreach events such as this. Athena will talk to Gina to see if the communications committee can work on developing some materials that could be used at outreach events like these. Athena commented that HR really wants employee's organizations more visible and this is one means that we can do this.

- j. Athena commented that the South Central Regional Representative position is still vacant, and we need to decide if we are going to let this sit vacant for the remainder of the year, or do we fill it temporarily. This position is one on the normal rotation of positions which will be voted on in 2017. Athena will follow-up with Carol about this.
- k. Our next meeting will have the Elders participating. The date is still in question, August 15 or August 22. Discussions followed. Athena would like to have a meeting where all members can call in and speak with the Elders. She would also like a meeting where the Council can express our appreciation to them. Melissa shared that at present on the calendar, there is a WEWAI session planned the week of August 15 so not all of the Elders will be able to attend. Athena will send out an email and see which date is best for all and decide from there.
- l. Closing thoughts & comments.
- 1) Athena extended her appreciation to everyone for attending the meeting.
  - 2) Adjourn – Being no further business, Athena adjourned the National Council meeting at 2:10 pm, Central.