



# AIANEA National Council Teleconference Minutes

Monday, April 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 Pratt, New Mexico*

### **1<sup>st</sup> Vice President**

*Dr. Carol Crouch, Oklahoma*

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

*Kirt Peterson, Colorado*

### **Secretary**

*Melissa Sturdivant, Texas*

### **Treasurer**

*Pam Crow, Texas*

*Bill Parrish, Pennsylvania*

### **Guests Attending:**

### **East Regional Representative**

*Cassius Spears, Rhode Island*

### **Midwest Regional Representative**

*Debe Walchuk, Minnesota*

### **Northern Plains Regional Representative**

*Cameron Clark, Wyoming*

### **West Regional Representative**

*Susan Looper, New Mexico*

### **Past Presidents Attending:**

*Steve Durgin, Washington, DC*

*Millie Titla, Arizona*

## **Meeting Minutes:**

- a. The meeting was called to order at 1:00 pm (Central) by Athena Pratt.
- b. Athena took roll call of those attending the meeting.
- c. Athena asked for additional items to the agenda, and reviewed what would be addressed this meeting, which includes:
  - Awards Program
  - NRCS vacancies
  - Tribal Liaison training
  - Complimentary memberships
  - Who's Who in USDA
  - Training conference in 2017
  - Representing AIANEA at conferences and events
  - Upcoming events
- d. Athena and Melissa discussed distribution of the minutes and how best to get this done. Athena would like to have these distributed by email for review and approval.
- e. Awards.
  - Facilitator – *Millie Titla*
  - 1) Millie will continue to Chair this committee for the remainder of the year with the Council's approval.
    - Motion from Council to approve Millie's continued work as Chair of the Awards Committee until the end of 2016.*
    - Motion: Kirt Peterson*
    - 2<sup>nd</sup> Motion: Cameron Clark*

*All voted in favor to approve Millie continuing as Chair of the Awards Committee and with no votes opposed, the motion passed and is recorded.*

- 2) Millie indicated that there will be 8 award categories and a \$600 budget
- AIANEA Leadership/Visionary Member Award
  - AIANEA Member Awards of Excellence
    - Natural Resources Conservation
    - AI/AN Community Outreach
    - Conservation Education
  - AIANEA Outstanding Member Award
  - AIANEA Mentoring Member Award
  - NRCS Employee Award of Excellence
    - Provided benefits to Tribes, AI/AN Clients, or NRCS Employees
    - Training &/or Support of NRCS Employees

Susan stated that folks often want to nominate someone but are hesitant to do so. Carol asked how we are distributing this information. Millie explained that it is usually sent to the membership by Yvette and then with reminders for nominations via follow-up emails. Millie shared that it is also difficult to nominate fellow members because we are so far apart from one another and often, we really don't know what we are all doing in our respective areas. Susan added that possibly we could approach this on a regional basis as people will know those in their region and will feel more comfortable making a nomination. Discussions followed.

Athena requested that we also include distribution of the awards nomination package to the SEPMS and other leadership, especially in consideration for the NRCS Employee Award of Excellence, which is targeted to recognize non-AIANEA members for their work in/for Indian Country. Carol asked about the newsletter and why this is no longer going out to our membership, and she commented that this was one of our best ways to reach people. It is a means to network with our colleagues, and other NRCS professionals across the country. How can we make nominations for these awards when we don't know what we are all doing? Susan also commented that we need the webpage up and going and use this to tell our story.

Discussions followed. Athena added that the Communications Committee is working to address some of these concerns. Athena commented that she needs to talk with Gina and firm up a timeline for this work.

Athena recommended that if only one nomination is received for the Member Awards of Excellence, that we just award one and not for each category. Athena would like to see two awards for the NRCS Employee Award of Excellence and for each of the sub-categories. Athena would like to keep the deadline as May 20 with the 8 categories. Once Yvette sends this out, Athena will then further distribute this information to the AIAN leadership. She indicated that if we do not receive nominations by the deadline, then we can get on the phone and start calling people to get nominations.

Athena also recommended that we extend this a little further, and write up something about the nominees who do not receive an award, and include this in our newsletter. Possibly we can dedicate a newsletter edition to the people making strides in Indian Country, as a means to honor all of the nominees.

Millie asked the Council for approval of the expenditures. Melissa clarified for Athena what is authorized according to the Bylaws, and because this is more than \$300, a vote would be needed to authorize the expenditure for the awards.

Steve asked about the President's Awards and how we will proceed with this. Millie indicated that these are not included in the 8 categories as these are a separate process allocated for the President, but still part of the Awards Program. Millie explained how some of these were done in the past and that it was usually three awards in most years. Discussions followed. Athena indicated that these are for the 2015 President's Awards. Steve wants to have two or three that he will award. Millie explained the breakdown of the budget and what the committee was looking at, which also includes a little to cover shipping and handling. So, about \$60 was estimated for the award and \$15 allocated for shipping and handling with a total expenditure estimated to be \$75 for each award. We have 8 categories and two President's Awards. Most agreed that past President's Awards were usually awarded to members.

Susan stated that anyone working with Tribes regardless of membership with AIANEA, needs to be considered for awards, as she felt this is a win-win situation and it puts the Association in the forefront

that we are recognizing others helping Indian Country. Carol stated that the President's Awards program was developed to allow the President to acknowledge and recognize members and their hard work.

Athena recommended that we have the 8 categories and 2 President's Awards for this award year of 2015. Steve can have one dedicated to a member and the other to whomever he chooses (a member or non-member).

*Motion from Council to approve the 8 award categories and 2 President's Awards at a budget of \$750.*

*Motion: Debe Walchuk*

*2<sup>nd</sup> Motion: Cameron Clark*

*All voted in favor to approve the 8 award categories and 2 President's Awards at a budget of \$750, and with no votes opposed, the motion passed and is recorded.*

Athena asked that Millie also include a listing of past recipients so people will know who has received an award recently.

Debe asked how this information will be distributed. Athena indicated that Millie will prepare the announcement, and send this to Yvette for distribution. Once this goes out to the membership, then Athena will send the announcement to Barry Hamilton, Deborah Clairmont and other employee association's leadership for further dissemination.

- f. *Employee's Association Get-together.* Athena reported that she had received an invitation to a meeting to be held by Melissa Drummond, Human Resources, on April 27. This is a meet and greet for the leadership of the employee's associations. Athena asked that Carol and Kirt attend as well.
- g. *NCRC Vacancies.* Athena reported that an announcement has been distributed announcing the vacancies on the National Civil Rights Committee. Discussions followed. Cameron indicated that he had applied for the Male AIAN representative. They may still be searching for a female AIAN representative.
- h. *Tribal Liaison Partnership.* Athena suggested that we designate someone in the Association to work directly with Barry so we have a direct line and foster our working relationship with him, and ensure that we are helping him to the best of our ability. Discussions followed. Steve recommended that Athena be involved in this, and Carol suggested that we include the Vice Presidents as part of this because then you have several years of leadership connected and part of the partnership and there will continuity. Athena will discuss this with Barry.
- i. *Complimentary AIANEA Memberships.* Athena reported that there had been some discussions recently about offering complimentary memberships. Athena reported that there is a supply of lapel pins available that can be included in the membership packets. Pam reported that if someone will forward the pins to her, she will include them as part of the membership letter when it is sent. Athena asked Pam if she can edit the membership form to indicate a complimentary membership, and Pam said she would get in touch with Yvette. Athena will work on a letter that can be included in the membership kit.

Athena asked if we can also include a space on the membership application for a donation and a gift of a complimentary membership. Athena suggested that each regional representative nominate someone for a complimentary membership. This would afford an opportunity for our Regional Reps to mentor as well.

Carol commented on the Scholarship Program and asked if we are still gifting an annual student membership to our scholarship recipients. Carol suggested that this may be an option for the Regional Representatives to consider as they gift a complimentary membership and that they consider the scholarship recipients.

Athena commented that based on the departmental guidelines that these complimentary memberships should be awarded to NRCS employees for right now. Discussions followed. Anyone can join the Association. Discussions followed regarding who can join the Association and hold membership. Athena will research this and come back to the Council with the information.

*Motion to allocate funds for one complimentary membership for a NRCS employee in each region which will be nominated by the respective Regional Representative.*

*Motion: Cassius Spears*

*2<sup>nd</sup> Motion: Susan Looper*

*All voted in favor to allocate funds for one complimentary membership for a NRCS employee in each region which will be nominated by the respective Regional Representative, and with no votes opposed, the motion passed and is recorded.*

- j. *Who's Who Poster.* Athena commented on the project work to develop a Who's Who poster for the AIAN employees in USDA. Rick Chavez will be at the SAIGE conference in June and hopes to take photos there. Steve added that this was started a couple of years ago and we disseminated this info to our members. Athena suggested that the Regional Representatives can also reach out in their respective regions, too.

- k. *Training Conference and Planning.* Steve reported that he was in touch with Jeffrey Dziedzic with the NEDC who assisted with getting the 2014 training seminars approved. Jeff assigned Jasiri (Jazz) Martin on his staff to work on this with us. Steve added that he sent information to Jazz and is waiting to hear back from him. Once we determine the best course of action, Debe asked if we will be able to link Tribal Liaison training with this national training. Debe thought our conference will be the platform to host other trainings. Steve stated that we need to move away from “conference” and target our work in developing “training.”

Discussions followed regarding selecting a location, partnering with other groups to offer training, and setting this up as a NEDC-sponsored training. Steve feels that this is key that we try to get it worked as an NEDC course. Athena asked if we want to move forward in the development of a “conference” or a NEDC course? Steve stressed that we incur the costs for hosting a conference versus how we have historically done this. Steve added that we need to make sure the “curriculum” is fresh and timely so that it is perceived as official and needed training versus simply attended an annual conference. Carol explained how the Working Effectively with American Indians (WEWAI) training has been developed with NEDC and how attending a training/conference is perceived by the State Conservationists. Steve agreed that if we can get the training approved as a NEDC-approved training course, then this would be the best option. If we can keep the content relevant and up-to-date, we ensure the future success of getting trainings approved. We show that the course is available each year, and the content is updated. With this, we show a need for continuous, and on-going enrollment.

Tribal relations, Trust Responsibilities and Consultation are key concepts which change and update each year. Susan discussed the recent passage of the Nevada Native Nations Land Act which is affecting how we do business in Indian Country and how we are able to provide program services to Tribes. We need to be cognizant of this as an emerging concept needing instruction for proper implementation. Debe added that this can be modeled much like the need to maintain conservation planning and other certifications as part of our everyday responsibilities. Debe also suggested that we add the MOU as part of this justification. Steve commented that much of what we need can be modeled after the WEWAI training curriculum. Discussions followed regarding the structure of the WEWAI model.

Athena suggested that we need to put this to a committee as these are all details that would need to be

- l. *Upcoming Events.* Athena reported that Steve has an outreach event planned in the near future. Athena commented that this would be a great opportunity for us to develop some materials that we can distribute at events such as these. We should think about tablecloths and banners.

Steve shared information about the event that he will have on display. Carol commented that she will forward to him some additional information that he can use.

Athena asked Steve to write something up so we can share this with people. She commented that some people feel that we should not be doing outreach, but she thought this would be a great message to share with others. Steve commented that we should all be encouraged to do outreach such as this.

- m. *Financial report.* Pam reported that the account balances are as follows:

Wells Fargo – \$ 20,008.25  
Frost Bank – \$128,677.22

- n. 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 2:26 pm, Central.