

White Earth Reservation Business Committee

Regular Meeting

October 31, 2023

Mahnomen, MN

Chairman Michael A. Fairbanks called the meeting to order at 9:21 a.m., roll call was taken with a quorum present.

Present: Michael A. Fairbanks, Chairman
Michael LaRoque, Secretary/Treasurer
Henry Fox, District I Representative
Eugene Sommers, District II Representative
Cheryl "Annie" Jackson, District III Representative

Absent:

Others Present: Laurie York, Executive Director
Curtis Rogers, Deputy Director
Tracy Lhotka, Chief Financial Officer
Ayecia Kemp, Executive Administrative Assistant
Maria Bevins, Recorder

Agenda Approval

Additions:

- **Waabigwan Mashkiki – Executive Session**
- **Water Litigation – Executive Session**

Motion made by Cheryl "Annie" Jackson to approve with additions: second by Henry Fox. Motion carried: 4 for, 0 against.

RBC Meeting Minutes

- No Meeting Minutes to Approve

Reports

Michael Fairbanks, Chairman provided a brief update.

Each RBC members place articles in the paper every month on what they are working on. The RBC has been very transparent. The Chairman has been working on a few projects. The RBC has been having continued discussions/meetings regarding the Tamarack Refuge and one of the Chairman's high priorities. They are having a discussion today regarding the 638. RBC went to Washington D.C and met with Congresswoman, Betty McCollum. Betty wants to make sure White Earth gets the funding after receiving the land.

White Earth will receive the 638 contract and the AFA, which is an Annual Funding Agreement. This funding will come from the Department of Interior directly to White Earth. The next step within a year or two White Earth will actually go for the deed of the land. The land will then come back to White Earth. The funding is around \$1 million a year for the Tamarack Refuge.

White Earth is working with the DNR on the White Earth State Forest. RBC is working with Brad Harrington -Tribal Liaison, the Assistant Commissioner and Bill Haas - lobbyist, on strategizing on the upcoming legislation in January. They will be drafting a bill regarding State Parks being returned to White Earth. White Earth State Forest is around 140,000 acres and Tamarack Refuge is around 98,000 acres of land to be returned. This had been done for other reservations and White Earth will be moving forward with the process to have this land returned.

The Chairman has been attending numerous meetings and White Earth hosted the TEC meeting last week. They are working on dates to be put out on the referendum for election on the blood quantum and will be discussed very soon. The Chairman also has been on a lot of consultations meetings within the last month and important to have good relationships with our commissioners in Minnesota. A brief update was provided on the Ridgeway project.

Michael LaRoque, Secretary/Treasurer provided a brief update.

Meetings Attended:

- Substance Abuse Disorder Summit Conference was held in Fond du Lac
- Indigenous Education meeting Mississippi River Towns and Cities meeting was held in Red Lake, MN. A very important meeting regarding our water.
- Minnesota Governor Summit

Budget meetings and approved the FY24 Budget on September 29, 2023. \$5.6 million deficit and had to make some tough decisions. The Feeding Our Families Program was cut out of the general fund budget, and this made some members mad regarding employees losing their jobs. These employees were referred to Human Resources to help assist them with finding other positions. This was not within the general fund budget. Human Services received a grant for Feeding Our Families, however, was unable to place in the general fund budget. This program will be coming back under the grant funding for members who need it.

Consultations/Meetings:

- Department of Education meeting
- Department of Health
- Department of Revenue
- Department of Commerce

These consultations are very important, they discuss funding sources for White Earth.

Tour of the White Earth Reservation:

- Northwest Minnesota Foundation Board
- West Central

White Earth is seeking funding for White Earth Community Councils through these foundations. Community Councils are lacking funding for the activities they have. Secretary LaRoque and District II Representative Sommers are collaborating with these foundations on funding sources for the Community Councils through them.

Consultations/Meetings:

- Rights of Nature
- MCT – TEC meeting
- NAFOA 2023 Fall Finance & Tribal Economic Conference

Continue meeting with Elder's and addressing concerns. The grand opening of the Congregate Kitchen was last week. Secretary LaRoque is continuing to work on budgets.

Henry Fox, District I Representative provided a brief update.

A brief update on the Elder Home Repairs. District I Representative Fox has been receiving several furnace calls and energy assistant calls. They are finding ways to assist members with fuel and help with furnace repairs. The Energy Assistance program has not yet received their funding.

A brief update on the Elders Tiny Homes. These homes will be for elders who are homeless, 55 and older. There will be an application process that will be followed for these tiny homes. They will have 5, two- bedrooms and 5, one-bedroom units. Thank you to all that has been working on these tiny homes and Tracy for all her hard work. Remember to check in on your family especially during the winter months.

Consultations/Meetings:

- Tribal State Relations Training
- Attending the Mash-Ka-Wisen Treatment Center Board meeting on Friday
- Working closely with elderly advocates.

Eugene Sommers, District II Representative provided a brief update.

August:

- Waabigwan Mashkiki opens for medical and recreational cannabis sales
- The Elders Commission Election has election to elect D2 Commissioner (Rebecca McCradie)
- DOC Tribal Probation Update: program is working well and will continue
- WE Hosted Tribal State Relations Training at Shooting Star Casino

September:

- Wild Rice Harvest: 250,427lbs of green rice bought = \$1.3Million in sales
- WE Natural Resources brought students ricing
- DHS Legislative Summit: Topics Brought Forward from White Earth
 - Billability of Traditional Healing Services
 - Increase Funding for WE ICWA to administer services
 - Emergency Shelter Grant Program

October:

- TEC Education & Human Service Sub Committee updates
 - Accepted Education, Human Services and Chemical Dependency Reports
 - Passed 2 resolutions: 1 approve MFIP Biennial Service Agreement in the amount of \$522,085, 2 approve resolution to recommend TEC to authorize MCT Executive Director or designee to negotiate and sign necessary documents to secure grants
 -

October Government Consultations:

- Bemidji City Council
- Minnesota Department of Health
- MN Tax Chair Gomez and Senator Rest
- Minnesota Department of Revenue

Project Updates:

- Mahnomen B&G Club: Estimated completion in December 2023
- Naytahwaush sports complex new playground and outdoor basketball courts
- Mahnomen Community Council will be using their land to build a playground and basketball courts
- Naytahwaush Skatepark getting updates: working with Ramp-Parts Skate Ramps for preliminary designs
- White Earth Parks & Rec make improvements on swim areas across the Reservation
- New Cell Tower for Naytahwaush was approved by TUC and will be constructed Spring 2024
- Naytahwasuh Street Light Project: Preliminary design layout done
- Mahnomen Wellness Center: project was scaled back into phases
- White Earth Enterprises announces new dispensary location at old Mahnomen car wash

Cheryl "Annie" Jackson, District III Representative provided a brief update.

Meetings Attended:

- Substance Abuse Disorder Summit Conference was held in Fond du Lac
- Cannabis – Great ideas; however, want to get into the gummies and vapes

A brief update was provided on a homeless shelter in Pine Point and will be working on a shelter for White Earth.

A brief update on Feeding Our Families. Other options would be Ruby's Pantry and working with the churches. Will need 20-30 volunteers and the cost is \$20 per family with half going to the church to help with their expenses. Start with asking the local churches to assist.

Family Treatment at Strawberry Lake will be running soon.

They have started with the winter gear up:

- Plastic on elders' windows
- Plowing and to plow to their fuel tanks

- Remember to check your tanks for low fuel, call if you are elder and need assistance

A brief update on the Elderly Home Repairs. Main concerns are roofs, windows, and doors. Trying to work on the worse homes first. There are 4 cabins from the lake side of Strawberry, each District Representative received one for elders who needed them, and they are very grateful, one of the cabins will be moved for an elder. District III and other districts bought trailer homes for their elders. District III bought 2 for elders. One did not have a home and only a bedroom, the other elder had infestation. One is moved and the other will be going to Pine Point to a disabled veteran. Programs are assisting in getting the trailer homes handicap accessible. These trailer homes were under \$5,000 and came from the Elder Funds.

Continued overview of Feeding Our Families to get back and running.

Elders Commission

Pam Aspinwall is present and introduced Rebecca McCradie, Elders Commission member. A brief overview of their FY 2023 Report was presented (Please see Attached Report).

The Elders Commission will be meeting with Don Dalve, finance, to help them be more effective in their finances.

Next meeting will be held on November 14, 2023, at 2:00 p.m.

Rebecca attended the National Indian Council on Aging. Rebecca would like to work on Dementia/Alzheimer's and to find resources for the White Earth Reservation. A brief conversation on resources.

White Earth Council of Elders

Lucille "Teedo" Silk is present and provided a brief update.

Health Care:

Resolutions were brought forward to the National Indian Council on Aging from White Earth. They want the Resolutions to be passed and heard. The resolutions were accepted and will be carried on by the lobbyists to the legislation in Washington. Treaties are not being heard and followed. Concerns were brought forward on adequate health care for White Earth.

Housing:

The elders would like to see the Tiny Homes for Rice Lake. They would like to address their concerns to the Housing Director regarding elder homes, issues and to answer questions. The White Earth Council of Elders are here to advocate for our elderly population and their services are all volunteer.

Aftercare:

There needs to be aftercare for individuals who are in recovery after treatment. Concerns brought forward. Follow-up needed for our members.

Housing and Homeless Issues:

All are connected to the drugs and alcohol issues.

Website:

Elders do not have computers and need to work on other ways to get the information to elderly people who do not have computers.

PCA:

Concerns brought forward on PCA workers and fraud. The elders would like to see a PCA program developed for White Earth to make sure that the work is being done.

Requests:

Elders who have reached out are not getting responses from programs. One issue for elders is cleaning the areas to their fuel tanks. This was discussed in the meeting today.

Teedo commented on Ruby's Pantry would be great for the White Earth Reservation.

Cannabis:

Concerns were brought forward regarding individuals smoking on the job.

Safety Issues:

Need to get the Police Force back.

A budget for the conference was provided to the RBC for review. They will be working on a budget for next year's conference.

Security Issues for the White Earth Congregate were brought forward. Concerns with RBC offices being closed.

Michael Fairbanks commented on the Human Resources Policy regarding cannabis. Employees cannot come to work impaired and will address the issues. Recommendation to submit a written report to Merlin Deegan, WEPD.

Sam Crowell provided a brief overview on the completed applications for plastic on elder's windows with hopes to start this week. They also will be shoveling for the elders this winter.

Food Shelf in Pine Point is running at full capacity. They serve elderly and young members. They do not turn anyone away. Stacie has been bringing back food to the elders in White Earth.

Concerns brought forward on vacancies of the White Earth Housing Authority Units. Concerns brought forward with Indian Health Services. Concerns were brought forward regarding the ENP site in Pine Point. The elders want to be able to visit after they eat their daily meals.

Recommendations will be coming soon for the ENP sites and then a decision will be made. Kathy will be bringing recommendations to the RBC for consideration and will be brought forward to each ENP sites.

Concerns with Community Council and Department Directors not being at the quarterly meetings.

Program Updates

White Earth Housing Authority – Not Present (Please see attached Report)

White Earth Indian Health Service:

Raimy Ronning, CEO at the Indian Health Service is present and provided a brief update. I.H.S is making improvements overall for the healthcare and the people that they are serving. The New Fiscal Year and is fully funded. Prioritizing hiring staffing for White Earth and Naytahwaush. This has been a challenge. Recruiting from entry level to administrative positions to Physicians and this has been a challenge.

Continuing to go through each department reviewing processes/procedures and areas they are falling short on. They are prioritizing which departments need the most help. The area office is helping to assist with the Dental Department and PRC. These are the areas that have the most complaints. Working on this and the several issues. Rebuilding the PRC program and going to follow the national policy. Any concerns or claims that have gone to collections please reach out to Raimy to assist with these concerns and she will address. Contact number: 218-983-6214.

Dental: working diligently on a solution and providing care at full function.

Construction updates: Everything is on track and will be done in the spring.

Working with HR specifically for White Earth Service Unit. Naytahwaush area, a designated individual will be working here and will be separate from White Earth. Weekly meetings are held with their Human Resources Department to review on the status of open positions.

Pharmacy and Nursing are doing vaccinations for flu, Covid, and RSV. Individuals can walk in and do not need an appointment.

Diligently working on dentists to come on board and qualified dentists in house. Come in with a new view on what is working for the people and what is not. Concerns brought forward regarding dentures.

Meeting recessed at 11:15 p.m.

Meeting reconvened at 12:06 a.m.

White Earth Tribal & Community College – Not Present (Please see attached Report).

The Chairman referenced the WETCC report.

Community Council Updates

Callaway: Not Present

Elbow Lake: Not Present

Iron Range: Not Present

Mahnomen: Not Present

Naytahwaush: Not Present

Cass Lake: Not Present

Pine Point: Not Present

Rice Lake – Not Present (Please see attached Report)

Henry Fox referenced the Rice Lake quarterly report.

Waubun – Not Present

Urban – Not Present (Please see attached Report)

Michael LaRoque referenced the Urban quarterly report.

White Earth:

Sue Hanks is present and provided the White Earth Community Council quarterly report. WECC held a Halloween Carnival last Saturday October 28th. 175+ kids and their families came through for the carnival. There were booths set up to win prizes/candy. WECC is selling raffle tickets for travel and in the process of planning their Christmas party and taking applications for the White Earth Christmas Toy Program.

Old Business

No old business for discussion

New Business

2023 Veterans Day Powwow Budget & Letter to Waive Event Center and Food Cost:

Motion made by Eugene Sommers to approve; second by Cheryl “Annie” Jackson. Motion carried: 4 for, 0 against.

Consent Agenda Signatory Request & Ratifications for October 31, 2023, with additions:

- **LLC**
- **American Indian Substance Abuse Advisory Council and Resolution – Executive Session**
- **Mental Health – American Indian Substance Abuse Advisory Council and Resolution – Executive Session**
- **Jeff Martin Automatic Agreement – Pull no longer needed**
- **Natural Resources Contract Mileage Correction - Typo**
- **Resolution – Rice Lake Tiny Homes**

Motion made by Michael LaRoque to approve with changes; second by Eugene Sommers. Motion carried: 4 for, 0 against.

Motion made by Eugene Sommers to go into Executive Session at 12:25 p.m. second by Cheryl “Annie” Jackson. Motion carried: 4 for, 0 against.

Proposed Finance Policy Change:

Tracy Lhotka is present and provided a brief overview of the changes to the Purchasing Policy

Brief discussion held on going with tribal businesses when ordering supplies. Tracy will send a purchasing policy to Eugene for review.

Motion made by Cheryl “Annie” Jackson to approve the changes to the White Earth Reservation Tribal Finance Procedures; second by Michael LaRoque. Motion carried: 4 for, 0 against.

Land:

Megan Bakken, Sarah LaFriniere, and Dustin Roy are present.

Homesites; District I – 3 sites, District II – 3 sites, and District III – 5 site:

Motion made by Cheryl “Annie” Jackson to approve; second by Eugene Sommers. Motion carried: 4 for, 0 against.

Lakeshore; District II – 2 sites and District III – 2 sites:

Motion made by Michael LaRoque to approve; second by Eugene Sommers. Motion carried: 3 for, 0 against and 1 silent.

Residential; District III – 1 site:

Motion made by Eugene Sommers to approve; second by Cheryl “Annie” Jackson. Motion carried: 4 for, 0 against.

Agriculture; District III – 1 site: Table

Service Line Agreement; District I – 1 site:

Motion made by Henry Fox to approve; second by Eugene Sommers. Motion carried: 4 for, 0 against.

Business; Norris Cultural Site: Table

Other Land Topics; MPCA Grant Application:

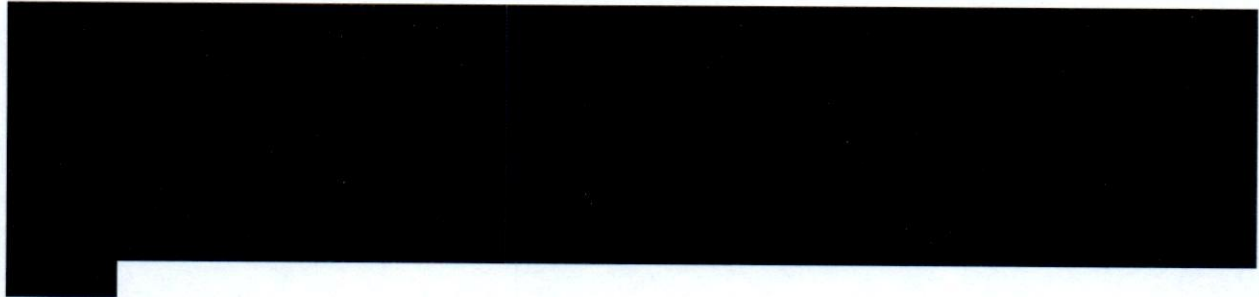
Motion made by Eugene Sommers to approve; second by Cheryl “Annie” Jackson. Motion carried: 4 for, 0 against.

Resolution – Division of Natural Resources, Budget Amendment to include Cultural Coordinator:
Motion made by Henry Fox to approve Resolution No. 057-24-003; second by Cheryl “Annie”
Jackson. Motion carried: 4 for, 0 against.

Mr. Roy provided a brief update on the water ordinance and monitoring. Need data asap.
Recommendation to have the General Counsel review contracts.

Meeting Recessed at 1:19 p.m.

Meeting Reconvened at 1:30 p.m.



Signatory Request - American Indian Substance Abuse Advisory Council:




Table

Signatory Request- American Indian Mental Health Advisory Council:



Table

Waabigwan Mashkiki:

Zach Wilson is presented Via Teams and provided a brief overview of Waabigwan Mashkiki
Capital Overview 

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Motion made by Eugene Sommers to adjourn the meeting at 2:37 p.m. second by Michael LaRoque. Motion carried: 4 for, 0 against.

Michael LaRoque, Secretary/Treasurer