

Maine Indian Tribal-State Commission
May 13th, 2022
In-Person Meeting at UMO (with Hybrid Zoom Option)
With Audio Stream for the Public

Commissioners Present (In person and by Zoom):

Darren Ranco, Sarah Medina, Ezekiel Crofton-Macdonald, Richard Rosen, Bob Checkoway, Sam St. John, Joseph Barnes, James Cote, Kevin Hancock

Staff Present: Paul Thibeault (Managing Director), Rachel Bell (Projects Coordinator)

Guests Present (In Person and by Zoom): John Banks and his wife, Cheryl, Chief Kirk Francis, Representative Rena Newell, Vice-Chief Darrell Newell, Kim Patwardhan, John Dieffenbacher-Krall, Judson Etsy-Kendall, Tony Sutton

Public: By audio stream

Review of Agenda

Commissioners reviewed the draft agenda and made some schedule adjustments in order to honor John Banks and address the Fishing Study early on.

Approval of Minutes- Commissioners reviewed minutes from April 8, 2022.

Motion: Sarah Medina made a motion to approve the minutes as drafted.

Seconded by Zeke Crofton-MacDonald. Motion approved unanimously.

Honoring John Banks: John Banks was honored for his many years of service to MITSC, with speeches by commissioners and guests. John passed around the traditional Penobscot “War Club” that was a parting gift of appreciation from MITSC.

Fishing Report Discussion: With Judson Etsy-Kendall and Tony Sutton available to answer questions, commissioners discussed the final draft of the Fishing Report, focusing on the “Recommendations” section at the end. Most of the debate centered around whether to promote listing Atlantic Salmon as an endangered species at the State level. It was decided that a follow up email would be sent out summarizing the pros and cons of State listing in greater detail. Judd and Tony would make an effort to incorporate some of the suggestions brought up by commissioners and provide an updated draft before the June meeting.

Financial Report: Paul Thibeault summarized the written report. There were no questions.

Staff Reports: Paul Thibeault referred commissioners to the written report outlining administrative work and other projects that took place from the April 8th meeting to the present. He also brought up the Holtrachem case and the stakeholder role of MITSC. Staff were directed to follow up by adding this item to the work plan, and commissioners will need to determine exactly what role it will be appropriate for MITSC to play. Rachel Bell provided an update on the ongoing Broad Reach Fund grant project, the PFAS bills (which passed and were signed into law), and the ordinance passed in Pembroke, Maine, to block Wolfden Mining Company and their proposed “Big Silver” mine.

Legislative Update: There was a brief discussion and summary of the legislative session and the final status of the Tribal/State bills with Legislative and Policy Committee members providing updates.

Administrative Update: The expiration of commissioner terms was discussed. Tribal commissioners indicated that they would contact their Chiefs regarding reappointment. The commissioners agreed to postpone any search for a new director until more accurate information about MITSC’s funding for the next cycle is available.

Discussion of the Future Role of MITSC:

It was noted that the new environment, which has resulted from improved direct communication in the last few years between tribal leaders and state government, potentially allows MITSC to evolve into a different and more expansive role than the one it has traditionally played. There was discussion about whether appointed MITSC commissioners must exclusively take direction from their various governmental leaders or can and should function more independently using their experience and best judgment to identify issues that they, as a commission, see as most pertinent to improving Tribal-State relations, as long as they fall within the rather broad purview of the statute. This was identified as a major topic to follow up on at the next meeting. Staff were directed to identify key questions, centered around MITSC’s role and purpose, and pose them to each commissioner before the next meeting, using their responses as a launchpad for further discussion.

Meetings: Commissioners decided to move forward with in-person meetings (but will continue to offer a hybrid option). The next MITSC meeting will be held in-person at UMO on Friday, June 10th with a remote attendance option. Staff will follow up on arrangements.

Motion to Adjourn: Sarah Medina made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Bob Checkoway. The motion was approved, and the meeting was adjourned.