



State Tribal Economic Development (STED) Commission
Helena Indian Alliance
501 Euclid Ave.
Helena, Montana
9:06 a.m. to 1:59 p.m.
Wednesday, February 21, 2024
(The official meeting minutes may be accessed on the recording)

Commissioners Present: Gerald Gray (Chair), Jennifer Finley (Vice-Chair), Richard Sangrey, Shawn Backbone, Delina Cuts The Rope, and Misty Kuhl.

Commissioners Virtual: Bryce Kirk.

Department of Commerce Staff Present: Rachele Brown, Marilyn Willson, Luke Robinson and T.J. Altekruse.

Department of Commerce Staff Virtual: None.

Guests Present: Todd Wilson - Executive Director for the Helena Indian Alliance; Amber Lamb – Workforce Integration Specialist with the Department of Labor & Industry; Megan Hill Sundry and John Knight – Humanities Montana; Donnie Wetzel Jr. – Department of Labor & Industry; Commissioner Troy Downing & Molly Plummer Securities and Insurance, Office of the Montana State Auditor; and Delina Cuts the Rope.

Guests Virtual: Christina Flammond – C & C Meat Processing, LLC, and Lynn-Wood Fields – Outreach & Recruitment Coordinator from Accelerate MT.

Call Meeting to Order

00:18 Chair Gray called the meeting to order.

00:59 Ms. Willson called the roll for Commission members.

Opening Prayer

01:52 Commissioner Backbone

Welcome

02:26 Chair Gray welcomed and introduced Todd Wilson the Executive Director for the Helena Indian Alliance.

Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items

08:34 No public comment.

Approval of Minutes

08:51 Presenter: Chair Gray
Motion to approve: Commissioner Sangrey
Second: Commissioner Backbone
09:45 Chair Gray called for a vote: All yes. Motion Passed.

Financial Literacy in Indian Country

09:58 Commissioner of Securities and Insurance and State Auditor Troy Downing explained that part of the role of his office includes outreach on both the security and insurance side. Financial literacy is one of the outreach and education his office provides. Mr. Downing explained they are trying to bridge the gap between communication and cultural understanding in all communities including tribal nations.

Mr. Downing explained they formed a group consisting of various agencies and organizations to determine the needs of tribal nations and determine how they can meet the needs and improve financial literacy with the youth in the community. Mr. Downing discussed different competitions and games that engage the teachers and the students in learning about financial literacy. Mr. Downing and Molly Plummer stressed that the group wants to make sure they include all people who want or need to be a part of this conversation so they can receive feedback on the needs of the community. They encouraged anyone interested in developing this group in this program to reach out and participate in their meetings.

Commissioner's Round Robin Discussion

35:43 Commissioners present provided tribal community updates.

Commissioner Sangrey reported his tribe is considering building an addition on the tribal office. Commissioner Sangrey reported they are also building approximately 18 houses.

Commissioner Backbone reported that there is a day care being built, senior citizens home is being renovated, and building some apartments as well. He also discussed how only 15 cents stays with the tribe and discussed issues with water rights.

Chair Gray reported his tribe started a food distribution program. The tribe also purchased 18 acres to develop single and multifamily homes. Chair Gray also stated that they recently found out from the Indian Health Services that they will be able to assume their clinics.

Vice Chair Finley reported that she is Regional Vice President for the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) and recently attended a conference. She stated the US Department of Commerce presented that they are looking into developing semiconductor tech centers and invest the money in workforce development to help young people and those wanting to change careers. Vice Chair Finley also reported there is a program called the Preservation and Reinvestment Initiative for Community enhancement (Price) Program offered through the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). They have set aside funds to rehabilitate modular homes.

Vice Chair Finley reported her tribe is in the beginning stages of planning a new travel center located at the northern part of the reservation. She also reported they are at the very beginning stages of a possible regional treatment center.

Commissioner Cuts The Rope reported that her tribe is involved in the Indian Country Recidivism Reduction Initiative (ICRRI) program through the Tiwahe Program. Commissioner Cuts The Rope also reported they are doing an emergency room expansion. Commissioner Cuts The Rope reported they are also doing a law enforcement project renovation which is almost complete. The tribe is also working on broadband connectivity.

Commissioner Kirk reported his tribe received approximately 16.5 million dollars for their Head Start centers. Their processing plant is getting ready to start and should be done by spring. They have a courthouse being built. They purchased houses in Culbertson for dentists. Commissioner Kirk reported they received the grant to fix up the housing at the buffalo ranch. They entered a contract with Three Rivers Communication to improve their broadband. The tribe has set aside 2.5 million dollars to open two feeding sites at Poplar and Wolf Point for the summer feeding program and after school program.

Humanities Montana

01:07:50 John Knight and Megan Sundy provided information regarding the programs and grants offered by the non-profit organization Humanities Montana. Some of these grants include the Mini-Grant awarding up to \$2000, Community Project Grants awarding between \$2,000 and \$10,000, Film and Video Grants awarding up to \$10,000 offered in three stages, and the Research Fellowships Grant.

HB 19

02:02:29 TJ Altekruze and Rachelle Brown presented information on the progress of HB 19 which was passed in 2023. The Office of Indian Country Economic Development (OICED) has been tasked with coordinating the efforts to create a system to comply with this law. OICED in collaboration with the STED Commission, tribal governments and other partners is developing a system for the gathering of data, to quantify on an ongoing basis, the economic contributions the tribes of Montana. Specifically, to collect and disseminate information regarding the advantages of developing the four categories of agricultural, recreational, commercial, and industrial enterprises within the state. OICED is working on developing an online dashboard that would house this economic data as it pertains to the four categories. Mr. Altekruze asked the STED Commissioners if they could recommend other stakeholders or partners that may be missing from the list.

Commissioner Kuhl stated that the American Indian Governments and Policy Institute at the University of Montana may be a potential partner. Chair Gray suggested working with the Department of Labor & Industry as well.

Ms. Brown asked for guidance from the Commission regarding a strategy on how to potentially get a cooperative agreement for data sharing with each tribal nation. Commissioner Kuhl suggested collaborating with her office as they are revamping the State Tribal Activities Database (STAD) which may contain some of the information we are trying to gather.

There was further information and discussion regarding HB 19.

FY 2023 Indian Equity Fund (IEF) Recipient

02:20:30 Ms. Willson explained that Luanne Belcourt with Cree-ations, LLC just informed her that she would be unable to attend the meeting.

Reports - Office of Indian Country Economic Development (OICED) Program Update

02:21:24 Mr. Altekruze provided the OICED program update.

Mr. Altekruze reported he and Ms. Brown attended the State-Tribal Relations Committee (STRC) meeting on January 11, 2024, giving an update on OICED's programs and status of HB 19. He stated that someone from OICED will be attending another STRC meeting in the future to provide an update on HB 19.

Mr. Altekruise reported that the Made in Montana Tradeshow is being held at the Lewis & Clark County Fairgrounds March 8 – 9, 2024. He also reported that the 2024 Governor’s Conference on Tourism in Missoula will be held on April 14 – 16, 2024.

Mr. Altekruise provided an update on the FY 2024 Tribal Business Development Grant (TBDG). The TBDG cycle closed on February 11, 2024. The application review meeting was held on February 15, 2024.

Tribal Tourism

02:28:04 Ms. Brown provided the Tribal Tourism update. Ms. Brown reported there are four exhibitors being sponsored for the Made in Montana Tradeshow. Four new members were recruited to the Native American Made in Montana program.

Ms. Brown told the Commissioners to email her this week if they were interested in attending the Governor’s Conference on Tourism and she will secure their registration and accommodation.

Ms. Brown reported that applications are due on April 30, 2024, for the Pilot Community Grant Program which is administered by the Department of Commerce’s Office of Tourism.

Ms. Brown also reported that she will be taking Sun Tours to the 2024 Great American West International Roundup (IRU) tradeshow being held April 19 – 22, 2024 in Wyoming.

Indian Equity Fund (IEF) and Native American Business Advisors (NABA) Programs

02:38:10 Mr. Robinson reported that he just completed the fiscal year 2023 IEF grant. Only one grant for \$12,000 was not utilized due to a family tragedy regarding an IEF recipient. There were 24 IEF grants awarded. Mr. Robinson reported there was a significant decrease in IEF grant applications. There were only 85 applications and approximately 125 applications the previous fiscal year. Mr. Robinson explained that this year they included applicants within a 50-mile radius of a reservation. Ms. Brown clarified that those living on a reservation were scored higher than those living off the reservation. There was further discussion on this topic.

FY 2023 Indian Equity Fund (IEF) Recipient

02:46:16 Christina Flammond owner of C & C Meat Processing, LLC, and FY 2023 IEF grant recipient talked about her business and how the grant has assisted her.

Tribal Work Group

02:57:37 Amber Lamb and Donnie Wetzel, Jr. discussed the meetings they have been a part of with the Tribal Employment & Recruitment Office (TERO), tribal citizens and leaders, state agencies, employers, companies, colleges and others. Mr. Wetzel Jr. stated the focus of these meetings centers around workforce development and creating relationships.

Film/Media Project

03:33:06 Amber Lamb and Lynn-Wood Fields presented information on their project offering production assistance scholarships in conjunction with the Department of Commerce. They discussed that they are open to film ideas. The next filming session will be announced. Ms. Fields also explained the TBDG could be an opportunity for tribes to purchase film trucks to be used and rented out.

Other Business

03:44:23 Rachele Brown wanted to add to her report to the Commission that she is in the process of developing the guidelines and rules for the Indian Equity Fund Tribal Tourism grant. Ms. Brown stated she is hoping to launch this grant program in the fiscal year 2025.

03:48:23 Chair Gray asked where the next STED Commission will be held. Ms. Willson responded that it will be held in Great Falls.

Adjournment

03:48:47

Presenter: Chair Gray

Motion: Commissioner Sangrey

Second: Commissioner Backbone

Chair Gray called for a vote: All yes. Motion Passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:59 p.m.