



Bayfield County Administrator

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Mark Abeles-Allison, *County Administrator*
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MINUTES OF THE:
Bayfield County Tribal Relations Committee Meeting
9:00am, Thursday, January 7, 2021
Virtual Meeting Via Web Ex, hosted by Red Cliff

Members Present: *Supervisor* Jeff Silbert, *Supervisor* Steve Sandstrom, *Vice Chair* Nathan Gordon, *Chairman* Rick Peterson

Others Present: *County Administrator* Mark Abeles-Allison, *Bayfield County Tourism & Recreational Director* Mary Motiff, *Bayfield County Forest Administrator* Jason Bodine, *Tribal Attorney* Wade Williams, *Red Cliff Community Health Center Environmental Health Specialist* Bryon Daley, *Chase Meierotto*, *Jon Gary*, *Bayfield School Board President* Nicole Boyd, *Bayfield County Clerk III* Paige Terry.

Called to order at 9:03 am by *Chair* Peterson

2. Public Comment:

Abeles-Allison reported that a note was received by Bayfield County from the Town of Russell requesting minutes and documents from a variety of County meetings and previous Tribal-County Relations meetings. Abeles-Allison summarized the note, stating that the Town of Russell had expressed concerns regarding land withdrawals from the County Forest within the Town of Russell that could impact the Town's forest/timber receipts. Abeles-Allison informed the committee that Dave Good from the Town of Russell had been notified of the time of the meeting and had been invited to speak at the committee meeting, but no word has been heard back. Peterson offered to give Good the opportunity should he join the meeting at a later time, but otherwise offered to place him on the next agenda as a separate item if he were unable to attend the current meeting. Abeles-Allison agreed with the suggestion.

3. Minutes of November 19, 2020:

Motion by Gordon seconded by Silbert to approve the minutes of November 19, 2020. Motion Carried, 4-0

4. Communications Review and Sub Committee Meetings Held:

Silbert informed that he had two items to review, the first item being of a personal nature as committee member/County Board Supervisor, Steve Sandstrom lost a brother over the holidays. Silbert explained that he wanted to offer up his condolences to Steve over his loss. The committee members offered up their condolences to member Steve Sandstrom. Silbert continued by explaining the second item that he would like to go over was the potential of a joint meeting between the Bayfield County Board of Supervisors and the Red Cliff Tribal Council.

Discussion took place regarding the impact of the previous joint meeting and the potential of holding a joint meeting with the Bayfield County Board of Supervisors and the Red Cliff Tribal Council.

Abeles-Allison suggested a tentative meeting date of November 30, 2021, the date of the regularly scheduled Bayfield County Board Meeting, to hold a joint meeting.

Silbert asked the committee if the Tribe would consider hosting the next meeting as the previous meeting was held in the Bayfield County Board Room. Peterson replied that it could be discussed moving forward. Abeles-Allison remarked that the tentative meeting would be added as a standing agenda item for the future.

5. Public Health Updates:

Peterson reported that the Red Cliff Community Health Center has started distributed vaccines but is facing a lot of challenges with obtaining vaccines. Fortunately, the Clinic has been able to receive 2 or 3 shipments of the vaccine.

Daley reported a decrease in positive COVID-19 cases but is not sure if that is due to the lack of want to be tested due to the holidays, or if less citizens are being tested. As of the morning of January 7, 2021, the Red Cliff Tribe reported 5 active positive cases, totaling 13 potential cases, with the rest being close contacts. Active COVID-19 numbers have dropped drastically since last meeting, but staff remains concerned that the effects of New Year's Eve haven't been seen yet. The Red Cliff Community Health Center has administered approximately 170 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. The Clinic will be scheduling for 100 more vaccinations the following week. Vaccines are being supplied through the National Supply Center in Oklahoma, and the Clinic remains unsure whether they are getting the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine until the shipment is received. Daley reported that the Tribe is following the CDC guidelines for administering the vaccine by ensuring that essential staff that deals with the public on a daily basis gets vaccinated first.

The committee members discussed the possibility of forming a Chequamegon area health response team which would consist of a panel with the two tribes, Red Cliff and Odanah; the two counties, Ashland and Bayfield, three municipalities, local hospitals, and the Northlakes Clinic to create a uniform response to outbreaks; such as COVID-19. No action was taken at this time.

Peterson informed the committee that the Bayfield School is contemplating reopening. Boyd reported that the Bayfield School Board has taken action to restart January 25, 2021, but the possibility will be revisited at the next monthly school board meeting on January 18, 2021.

Abeles-Allison reported that COVID-19 testing continues within Bayfield County. COVID-19 testing will be continuing in Iron River two times a month through the beginning of March 2021. Bayfield County vaccine distribution has begun with the main focus being on EMS and First Responders. Vaccinations have been going well thus far and Bayfield County has received approximately 65-75 doses a week so far.

Peterson reported that the Red Cliff Tribe is carrying on discussions with the Bayfield School Board regarding the testing capacity at the school, more specifically the testing equipment. Peterson explained that the Tribe receives testing supplies through IHS and it would be a violation of IHS policy to give those supplies to the Bayfield School. Peterson questioned if Bayfield County would be assisting the Bayfield School with acquiring testing supplies. Abeles-Allison stated that question would be best answered by Sara Wartman of the Bayfield County Health Department.

6. Ice Caves 2021, COVID Implications:

Peterson explained that, should the ice caves open this year, it may raise concerns regarding a large influx of people and the possibility of spreading COVID-19, particularly with the new strain that is found to be 75% more contagious than the previous strain. Peterson commented on the fact that individuals from all over the world came to see the ice caves the last time they were open. Peterson stated a desire to open a discussion for ideas to best mitigate the risk of an outbreak as many individuals travel to the area.

Discussion took place regarding the potential of opening up the ice caves this winter and possible precautions that may have to be taken due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Motiff explained that the weather does not appear favorable to opening up the ice caves this year and there have been recommendations to not announce the opening of the ice caves even if the weather permitted it.

Motiff explained that the main challenge facing the Tourism industry is what is available to tourists when they are here. Motiff is looking to touch base with all local restaurants in an attempt to compile a list of what is available for in-person dining versus curbside pick-up.

Motiff informed the committee that the Tourism group would be attempting to have a meeting on January 18, 2021.

7. Discussion and Possible Action Regarding County Lands on the Red Cliff Reservation:

a. Grant Applications

Bodine reported that a discussion had occurred regarding a new acquisition project that focus on 350 acres of County forest land. Bodine informed the committee that the topic regarding the next project would be added to the next Forestry Committee meeting agenda for the meeting

scheduled on Monday, January 11, 2021. Meierotto reported that a GLRI Application is currently being worked on and the GLRI application would be due mid-February 2021.

Bodine reviewed the procedure for distributing timber sales revenue to the Bayfield County towns.

Abeles-Allison reviewed the issue expressed by the Town of Russell regarding the removal of county forest lands from the town. Abeles-Allison read the last sentence of the email received from the Town of Russell which stated, "This would reduce the Town's annual payment from the County by about 10%, this year the payment was \$20,000."

Bodine reported that the salvage job on Blueberry Road was completely harvested, with only some hauling work left to continue through the winter. Gordon questioned if the work area would remain open once the logs are removed to allow Tribal Members to harvest firewood. Bodine stated the access to the worksite was only temporary, but there was a potential to keep the worksite open.

b. Potential Legislative Initiatives

Abeles-Allison reviewed the difference between In Rem Tax Parcels and Tax Delinquent Parcels, focusing specifically on the public auction component of selling In Rem Tax Parcels. Abeles-Allison explained that a provision exists with state statute that allows for direct transfer of parcel to municipalities or the State and that Bayfield County is attempting to find a solution that would add Tribes to the statute.

Discussion took place regarding requirements within County forest law pertaining to divesting forest land and the steps that could be taken to add language to state statutes that would allow the direct transfer of county land to Tribes. The Wisconsin Counties Association suggested that a description of the specific section of the statute that was being looked at to be changed be drafted.

The committee reviewed the different possible approaches provided by the Wisconsin Counties Association that the County may explore to get the desired changes made.

Peterson asked that the topic be added as a standing item for the next agenda. Abeles-Allison replied that it would be added to the next agenda.

Peterson asked that Williams be able to work with a member of Bayfield County to keep the discussion going. Abeles-Allison informed Peterson that he would get Corporation Counsel, John Carlson to share his prepared write-up with Williams once it is completed.

8. Discussion Regarding Tribal Land Resolution:

The committee discussed the possibility of drafting a joint resolution between Bayfield County and the Red Cliff Tribe that would express the County's intent of continued land repatriation to the Red Cliff Tribe.

No action was taken at this time.

9. Discussion Regarding 2019 Senate Bill 886 Regarding DOT Transportation Aid Transfers to County's with Tribal Headquarters:

Peterson informed the committee that the bill was brought before Dave Ujke for review. The item was forwarded to the next meeting.

10. Superior Days Topic Review:

Abeles-Allison reported that it did not appear that the regular Superior Days activities would be happening this year. Discussions have taken place regarding the possibility of Ashland County, Bayfield County, Red Cliff Tribe, and Bad River Tribe compiling a short list of topics to discuss as well as some virtual meetings with legislators in Madison to stress the importance of certain topics. Abeles-Allison suggested one such topic being legislative modifications that have been discussed pertaining to land repatriation. Another topic could be the local EMS crisis, due to volunteerism, EMS services for six towns in Ashland County, out of a total of 11 towns, have discontinued. Three of the towns have found other providers, three towns remain without EMS providers. Abeles-Allison expressed concern over the issue and questioned what dispatch is supposed to do when a 911 call comes in for those towns without EMS providers. Abeles-Allison suggested stressing the importance for EMS availability in our rural community. Abeles-Allison reported that there is legislation currently available that does support volunteer EMS providers. Abeles-Allison suggested that such legislation may be something worth endorsing in a joint effort along with creating local and statewide incentives.

11. Next Meeting:

Thursday, March 18, 2021; 9:00 AM - **Tentative**

12. Adjourn:

There being no further business to discuss, a motion was made by Sandstrom seconded by Silbert to adjourn the meeting. Motion Carried, 4-0 meeting adjourned at 10:29 a.m.