

**SQUAXIN ISLAND TRIBAL COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
March 12, 2020**

Attendance:

Tribal Council	Arnold Cooper	Chairman
	Charlene Krise	Vice Chair
	Vicki Kruger	Treasurer
	Jeremie Walls	Secretary
	Bev Hawks	1st Council Member
	David Whitener, Jr.	2nd Council Member <i>(absent)</i>
	Vince Henry, Sr.	3rd Council Member
Tribal Administrator	Marvin Campbell	
Operations Director	Erika Thale	
Recording Secretary	Melissa Puhn	

Charlene Krise offered the opening prayer. Arnold Cooper called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

Marvin Campbell started the meeting by discussing COVID-19. He shared that Council needs to make a decision now on how to respond with the current events. His recommendation is to have essential personnel working only. Squaxin has a lot of elders and vulnerable adults so measures need to be taken to ensure their health and safety. Marvin stressed the importance of being proactive and not waiting until there are cases in Mason County, or even Squaxin. Arnold added that he is supportive of the idea to cut back on staff for at least two weeks and to sanitize the buildings. Council also wanted to encourage the Shelton School Superintendent to consider doing the same, instead of waiting until it's too late. There are many people coming in and out of our area, who are carriers, and it would be best to err on the side of caution.

Marvin shared his concern that larger cities have not yet shut down, based on their concern for their economy. He does not feel it is worth the lives of the elders. It is Squaxin's mission to protect the lives of their elders; something needs to be done now to ensure their protection.

Ray Peters shared that according to OSPI Superintendent Rykdel, it is up to the individual school districts on how they each choose to respond.

Council had extensive discussion regarding the schools possibly closing, including higher education and the access to education.

Erika shared that she and Gordon are meeting this afternoon to come up with alternate options for education, if the schools are shut down: how to continue learning and how to access homework.

Vicki added that no unnecessary spending that was enacted, which includes IEI and LCCR. All spending needs to stop and construction projects need to be put on hold. She also added that per capita would be affected, and payroll needs to be a priority for as long as possible. She does not want to start laying people off.

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After discussion, Council asked Marvin to contact Superintendent Alex Apostle to share that Squaxin will be pulling the tribal kids out of all Shelton Schools, starting on Monday and want homework to be assigned for them to take home.

Marvin added that if the tribe cannot mitigate keeping the virus at bay, then as an alternate, there needs to be a safe place for the vulnerable adults and elders. There was discussion about using the hotel as a safe zone.

Ramone Nunez from Little Creek Casino was present. He shared that they are currently installing hand sanitizer stations throughout the Casino. They will be receiving those tomorrow. They have increased cleaning on the gaming floor, with that; they are running low on cleaning supplies.

Jeremie asked if they are advertising the amount of cleaning that is happening, to show their patrons that the casino is a safe place to go. He suggested closing the Casino for a couple of days to allow for sanitizing.. Ramone added that they have shared that information on the casinos website as well as email and signage. Council was not in agreeance of closing the casino, but wanted it made clear the importance of cleaning and to share that information with their guests.

Council added that this also goes for IEI and their businesses. They would like to see increased cleaning. Dave Johns was present, and added that they are all working together to come up with the best course of action. He will have a full report at their work session next Wednesday.

Vince Henry made the motion to have only essential staff working at the Tribal Government and to request that the Shelton School District excuse the tribal youth from school. He added that there needs to be a backup plan or a safe space for the elders and vulnerable adults.

Dave Johns inquired about the Child Development Center. Arnold stated that it will be closed. Vicki shared her concerns that many tribal members and employees, who are essential staff, rely on the Child Development Center and she would like to see them at least remain open for those people.

Bev Hawks seconded the motion.

Motion carried five (5) in favor and zero (0) against.

Marvin will keep Council updated on his discussion with the Shelton School Superintendent. Charlene would like to consider the hardships on families that suddenly do not have childcare. Erika added that if the tribe does close the Child Development Center, there could be discussion with the entities about allowing staff to bring their kids to work, if they have to.

Vicki wants a report on the bottom line impact with this. She also would like an additional meeting with LCCR to get a financial report and how this will affect per capitas.

Jeremie stressed the importance of advertising the safeguards that LCCR is doing to keep their patrons safe. Arnold suggested increasing the hours of the daily closure, to deep clean.

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LCCR and IEI will be discussing this further at their work sessions next week.

TRIBAL ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE

Deb Stoehr (*via phone*), Richard Sweeney and Ramon Nunez were present to discuss the logistics of an Audit Committee, with Council. They have discussed hiring one audit firm for FY20 and the three of them will meet together to present to Council the audit process.

Charlene added that she likes Marvin's suggestion, to not have Council Members serving on Committees and Commissions, allowing staff and tribal members to make those recommendations. She would rather see the tribal financial staff not hampered by politics.

Medicaid rate: June O'Brien, Ofi Tovia and Bekki Ayres were present for an update on the Medicaid rate and how it will affect the NWITC. Council approved proceeding to develop documents for the Medicaid All Inclusive rate for tribal residential treatment. June will return later with a resolution for final approval, after Finance and Ray have reviewed them.

June shared how they are sanitizing; creating an isolation room and making staff stay home if ill.

TRIBAL LIAISON UPDATE

Ray shared how he has been tracking funds and ways the federal government is looking at ways to mitigate the costs of COVID-19. Ideas such as tax rebates and lower interest rates have been discussed at the federal level. Ray stated that DC is asking for a white paper on impacts that the tribe is facing: everything from shellfish impacts to administrative costs such as sick leave and annual leave. Ray is drafting the paper and working the NR, Clinic, HR and will include tribal businesses. Charlene added that the psychological stresses being caused by this as well; she would like to see mental health included.

Ray shared that the Tulalip Tax bill passed. He hopes that Squaxin can build on that compact and will open more opportunities for the tribe. Charlene would like to possibly look to collaborating with other tribes for business opportunities and potential expansions.

Ray shared that the sports betting bill signing will not be public, since the Governor is not doing public signings this year.

Ray added that he is a board member for the Economic Development Council. There are many leaders in Mason County who sit on this board and it has served as a good area for Squaxin to gain information. Currently, LCCR pays the membership dues, and they believe that it should be a government due, and should not be on LCCR. Ray needs Council permission to pay that membership, which is \$4000 a year. Arnold believes that if the Casino has paid it, they need to continue paying it. Charlene would like the Council Secretary to address a letter via email to

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Michael Peters to pay the fee, as directed by Council, and Ray will continue being a board member.

With the State and Federal elections coming up, Ray would like to see Council make financial contributions to the campaigns of Beth Dolgio and Kristine Reeves, at \$750 each. Both of these candidates are friends of the tribe. Vicki thanked Ray for tracking politicians, but since we are in times of unnecessary spending, she feels that the tribe cannot contribute as much as normal at this time. Council approved these two contributions only at this time. Ray will take direction from Council on how to deal with contributions as of now.

INFORMATION SERVICES

Morgan Rothrock was present to discuss virtual meetings and to share with Council what the capacity is for working offsite.

TRIBAL ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE (continued)

Marvin gave a Public Safety and Mason County MOA update in closed session.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Andy Whitener, Jeff Dickison, Erika Marbet and Candace Penn were present.

NOAA Resolution: Candace presented **Resolution #20-08, which** is a small grant and will be run through NWITC. These funds are through the NOAA Regional Vulnerability Assessments and will be used for Ocean Acidification and coastal management planning. Vicki moved to approve the grant resolution. Jeremie seconded the motion. The motion carried five (5) in favor and zero (0) against.

Jeff Dickison presented **Resolutions #20-09 and #20-10**, both which pertain to sovereign immunity language in contract agreements with the Department of Ecology. Legal has reviewed the updates and recommends approval. Vicki moved to approve both resolutions. Vince seconded the motion. The motion carried five (5) in favor and zero (0) against.

Jeff presented **Resolution #20-11, which** is a contract award from the Department of Ecology with several projects to implement; which Squaxin is using to award other entities for their projects. One being an award from Squaxin to the Department of Corrections to extend their reclaimed water line at the prison. These funds will be coming from the Department of Ecology. Vicki moved to approve both resolutions. Vince seconded the motion. The motion carried five (5) in favor and zero (0) against.

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Taylor Water Update/Groundwater Right Application: Jeff shared the history of the water supply across from Taylor Shellfish on Lynch Road and the water right application.

Legal has been working closely with NR regarding that particular water right and whom it will go to. Jeff shared the tribal plan and strategy of the water right, while protecting the Elson watershed. The Department of Ecology is reviewing the application by looking at what is available and what the needs and developments involve. Taylors are in the need of an expansion and still unsure of their timeline. There needs to be infrastructure developed as well as a mitigation plan and operations agreement. The tribe needs to engineer a connection to our existing system, plus construction of a pipeline. Vicki asked about the cost and if we expect to start spending funds after April, she wants to make sure that it is timed right financially. Charlene added that she is concerned about the potential development of that area and how it will tax the Elson Creek watershed immensely. This is an update only. Jeff will have new information within the next month.

Geoduck Fishery: Eric Sparkman presented an Aquatics Update. Eric shared a presentation showing the overview of the fishery history and the impacts there are today. He shared what the biomass is, what is returning and what the harvest rate is.

Vicki asked what happens since the Aquatics Committee did not like the decision that will be made. Jeremie shared that he felt the Aquatics Committee needs to have their input. He shared that there was no opposition from the committee, but at the end of the meeting yesterday, the committee understood the importance of this decision. The committee needs to approve new divers and discuss a reallocation. The committee will make a decision next week and Council will need to make a final decision at their next meeting, before April 1. The proposed change is a smaller harvest rate for the quota holders in order to attempt to revive the fishery. Jeremie shared his appreciation for Eric and the hard work that he has put into this fishery and the tribe.

NR is not ready to plant geoduck, but Eric feels they need to start looking that way, however, it's a very expensive and time consuming project.

Council will wait for a recommendation by the Aquatics Committee at the next Council Meeting.

Andy said that they will continue working with the state on a management strategy.

Jeff handed out information regarding the Nisqually Reach Aquatic Reserve. They apologized for not including Squaxin during setup of the Reserve and have agreed to add Squaxin to the signage. They would like artwork from Squaxin to add, which needs to be in black and white. Jeff asked if the tribal logo can be used, in black and white? Council approved.

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ELECTIONS UPDATE

Josh Whitener and Tammy Ford were present to provide an update from the Elections Committee. Josh shared the new members that have joined the committee and existing members. They have cancelled the upcoming forums due to the virus, and plan to discuss options by doing in person interviews with candidates. Unsure of the feasibility, but will figure something out. They will be doing a special newsletter this year that will have the candidate information, and whatever information is pertinent to the upcoming election. This will be separate from the Klah-Che-Min. Tammy has delegated her responsibilities to the committee and stepped down since she plans to run for Council this year.

There has been a lot of discussion about the upcoming General Body Meeting date. The committee recommends postponing. The constitution states that elections must be held in the spring, the last day of spring is June 20th. They could legally postpone to June 20th, which is a Saturday and the last day. However, the company that runs the elections is not available that day; but is on June 27th, the following Saturday. Council agreed to postpone the General Body Meeting until June 27th. The committee also made the recommendation to only allow registered voters to attend the meeting, in order to cut down on unnecessary contact with people.

Shelton School District update: Marvin shared that he contacted Shelton School Superintendent, Dr. Apostle regarding the discussion from this morning, and removing Squaxin kids from school and what we can do to not fall behind. Governor Inslee addressed the State at 2pm today and is taking a mild approach to a serious problem. He suspended schools for only three counties. Marvin feels that all schools in the state need to be suspended. He will call Dr. Apostle in the morning to discuss this further.

Council discussed the Child Development Center and keeping it open for essential personnel, IEI and LCCR staff who must stay at work. Vicki would like staff to be available to collect kids homework and keep the kids learning while they are home. Marvin will reach out to Michael Peters regarding using the hotel as a quarantine for vulnerable tribal members to keep them safe. They will not be allowed to go to the Casino, and need to stay in the rooms and will be brought food.

After extensive discussion, Council agreed by consensus that the Casino will close each day from 4am until noon to do a daily sanitize of the building. They would like the Casino to advertise the measures they are taking to ensure the public that it is a safe place to go. Jeremie will reach out to Ramon and Michael.

Marvin added that if the Tribe goes in to a State of Disaster, LCCR and IEI will fall under Councils control, and tribal government will operate with essential personnel only.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:03 p.m.