

BURIAL BOARD MINUTES MEETING OF MAY 17, 2007

The annual meeting of the Burial Preservation Board was held in the Native American Room of the State Capitol on May 17, 2007. The meeting commenced at 10:20am until 2:15pm.

Attending were: Carl Fourstar, Rueben Mathias, Sherri Deaver, Loren "Bum" Stiffarm, Dr. Randall Skelton, Mickey Nelson, Steve Platt and Katheryn Rink. Non members in attendance were; Dal Smilie, Stan Wilmoth, Sarah Bond, Andrew Huff and Ms Mathias. Hal Harper, senior advisor to the Governor, visited briefly and welcomed the members and thanked them for their service.

Chairman Fourstar welcomed the members and attendees. He expressed his gratitude that appointees had volunteered to represent Native People and for the other positions. Attendees introduced themselves. The Chairman challenged attendees to contact Tribal Nations not currently represented to send their nominations to Patti Keebler, Boards and Councils Advisor with Governor Schweitzer.

Mickey Nelson moved and Randall Skelton seconded that the minutes of the June 15, 2006 meeting be accepted.

Bum Stiffarm said he thought the effort to meet via video was very efficient and saved members much travel time. The Board discussed how to make meetings more efficient and available to all members. It was thought this would help get all Tribal Nations to nominate members and to get those not in attendance to future meetings.

The Board discussed how the Board could be better publized and Andy Huff and Dal Smilie agreed to look into how to get information to local newspapers. Andy Huff and Sarah Bond agreed to think about an appropriate PSA for electronic media.

Bum Stiffarm nominated Carl Fourstar for Chairman. Nominations were closed and Fourstar was elected as the Board's Chairperman. Sherri Deaver nominated Bum Stiffarm as Vice Chair, nominations were then closed and he was elected.

The Board then discussed the Rudyard area burial after Stan Wilmoth presented a briefing concerning it. The Board was concerned that even though it was obvious that it was a ancient Native American burial that the Sheriff/Coroner had removed part of the remains and sent them to the crimelab. The reburial had not happened at this point.

Stan reported that the original site was still eroding after rim rocks had collapsed and the landowner was supportive of a reburial nearby. Stan will organize the field review and put together an inventory of material exposed.

The Board discussed how to locate the proper tribal representatives to conduct the reburial. Bum and Katheryn Rink will take the lead on identifying the proper representatives.

Bum moved to have the Attorney General investigate the actions of the Sheriff/Coroner's conduct in this matter and to prosecute for any crimes committed. The motion passed with Mickey Nelson voting against it. Sarah Bond promised to communicate this action to the Attorney General.

Mickey indicated that he would continue to educate coroners about the proper way to follow the act so as not to unnecessarily disturb burial sites. He feels education is the best way to get compliance.

The Board then considered the MDOT request to conduct scientific analysis on a possible grave in Mineral County. Dr Skelton indicated there was scientific interest in potential historical burial sites but that the scientific case was not made in this case. Sherri Deaver agreed. Steve Platt had visited the site and agreed with Skelton.

Reuben Mathias questioned why there was any reason to disturb a possible burial that was not immediately threatened by construction, weathering or by vandalism. Platt agreed that any trail to be constructed in this MDOT owned former squatter or homestead site could be rerouted away from the possible grave.

Mickey Nelson moved and Reuben Mathias seconded a motion to deny the request. Discussion then followed about the correct amount to charge pursuant to statute for these study requests (\$50).

Under old business Steve Platt discussed offers of a burial plot in a Miles City cemetery to inter remains and objects not otherwise reburied. A Fort Keogh site was also discussed for some specific remains originally found in that site.

The Board discussed a BIA suggestion that a mausoleum be built for remains not otherwise reburied.

The Board continued its discussions about how to better educate developers, county permitting agencies, commissioners, sheriffs and coroners about what to do when remains are discovered. Skelton indicated that there were lots of local archeologists who could be tapped to assist Sheriff/Coroners.

Jennifer Bottomly from the Montana Historical Society brought a list of remains and funerary objects held for the Board's further action. The Chairman and Bum will find appropriate tribes to handle each of the remains; Mickey will rebury non Native American remains originally from the Helena area. The Board agreed all items and remains should be properly reburied or if not funerary in nature a plan prepared for return to the correct Tribal Nation within three months.

Stan Wilmoth reported that he presented written material to the annual museum association meeting on how to treat burials and funerary objects. He will repeat this in the future.

The next meeting will be set by the Chairman consulting with members.

Bum Stiffarm moved and Mickey Nelson seconded a motion to adjourn and the meeting was adjourned.