



State Tribal Economic Development (STED) Commission

Montana Little Shell Chippewa Tribal Office

511 Central Ave. W.

Great Falls, MT 59404

9:14 a.m. to 2:54 p.m.

Wednesday, May 8, 2024

(The official meeting minutes may be accessed on the recording)

**Commissioners Present:** Gerald Gray (Chair), Shawn Backbone, Melissa Lonebear, Mark Blasdel and Bryce Kirk

**Commissioners Virtual:** Richard Sangrey

**Department of Commerce Staff Present:** Rachelle Brown, Marilyn Willson, Luke Robinson, T.J. Altekruise, and Katie Willcockson

**Department of Commerce Staff Virtual:** Olivia Kettenring

**Guests Present:** Nikki Geiszler – Montana World Affairs Council; Kryss Holmes – Montana Arts Council; Jason Gardiner – Big Sky Decon; and Max Gardiner – Big Sky Decon.

**Guests Virtual:** Emily Mayer – Havre Historic Tours and Stacey Moore – Mobile Coffee.

#### **Call Meeting to Order**

00:07 Chair Gray called the meeting to order.

00:44 Ms. Willson called the roll for Commission members.

#### **Opening Prayer**

01:33 Commissioner Backbone

#### **Welcome**

02:09 Chair Gray welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### **Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items**

02:29 No public comment.

#### **Approval of Minutes**

02:44 Presenter: Chair Gray

Motion to approve: Commissioner Kirk

Second: Commissioner Backbone

04:41 Chair Gray called for a vote: All yes. Motion Passed.

#### **Native American Collateral Support (NACS) Program**

04:55 Olivia Kettenring the Business Development Manager from the Department of Commerce, Business MT gave an overview of the NACS program. Ms. Kettenring explained there are 12 approved lending institutions across the state. Ms. Kettenring described different loans and success stories. Ms. Kettenring also provided

information on the next tranche of SSBCI money which will be focused on those living in rural areas and/or those living on reservations.

Chair Gray asked if the NACS program is on hold. Ms. Kettenring clarified that there is not much money available. She believes there will be two to three applications being submitted in the next few weeks and then there will probably not be NACS money available. Ms. Kettenring explained there is generally a tiered CD structure on the CD anniversary dates, so then in a year we will see \$40,000 of what was invested. She explained the money does revolve but the timing is important and will lend out the funds that are available in the NACS program. So, Ms. Kettenring explained that the money in the NACS program replenishes as the loans are paid as agreed.

Chair Gray asked where the applications could be found. Ms. Kettenring explained it was on the Business MT website where the credit underwriting form (from the lender), a collateral support application, and certification form can be found.

Chair Gray asked when the SSBCI applications will be available. Ms. Kettenring stated the application period is expected to be open August 1 – August 31, 2024.

Luke Robinson asked when the NACS program was moved from the Office of Indian Country Economic Development (OICED) to a different office in Business MT as he stated the program has always been under OICED. Mr. Robinson also questioned the underwriting criteria.

Ms. Kettenring explained the Department of Commerce doesn't have a lot of restrictions on underwriting. That they rely on the banks and the Community Development Financial Institutions to use their normal operating procedures and lending practices.

Ms. Kettenring stated the moving of the NACS program to a different office within Business MT was a recent decision made by the previous Division Administrator.

Commissioner Kirk asked who would make the decision to move the NACS program from OICED to another office within Business MT as he felt this is where the frustration comes from as the STED Commission was not informed of the change or had any discussion regarding the change. Chair Gray also expressed frustration. The Commissioners stated the Department needed to ensure meaningful consultation happened when changes are considered.

The Commissioners requested a list of programs within the Department of Commerce that they are eligible for.

### **Commissioner's Round Robin Discussion**

30:15 Tribal commissioners provided tribal community updates. Commissioner Blasdel provided office updates.

Commissioner Backbone stated his tribe is working on the Indian Health Services apartments and an irrigation project. He stated their coal mine will be closing.

Commissioner Lonebear reported her tribe is having elections this year. The tribe received a large broadband grant. Ms. Lonebear also reported there are four to five buildings purchased with American Rescue Plan Act funds. They have reopened the craft center. The tribe is renovating the house and the campground at Bear

Butte which is located in South Dakota. The tribe has solar projects. They started with 15 homes and are planning for 60 more.

Commissioner Kirk reported his tribe wants to purchase 50 acres of property by Fort Peck Lake. The tribe recently purchased 9 million dollars' worth of land next to the Missouri to be used for equine therapy.

Commissioner Blasdel, Director of Economic Development in the Governor's Office, reported he has been working with the Department of Administration for the roll out of the approximately \$629 million received for broadband. This is separate from the money that was specifically allocated to tribes. There was consultation in a closed meeting held last year with the tribes regarding broadband that he felt went well to allow tribes to vent frustrations.

### **Montana World Affairs Council**

01:00:23 Nikki Geiszler from MWAC presented information regarding MWAC. MWAC is a non-partisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to global education opportunities in communities and schools statewide. Ms. Geiszler discussed EconoQuest which is a multi-day conference on international trade, economics, and careers.

Katie Willcockson from the Department of Commerce provided a snapshot of what the international market looks like in Montana. Ms. Willcockson stated her team promotes tours to visit the state, promote businesses to settle in the state, and work with businesses within the state to get their products into international markets. Ms. Willcockson said the EconoQuest program helps educate the youth, so they are more aware of exporting to be able to rise to the challenges and see the opportunities.

### **Montana Arts Council**

01:27:21 Krys Holmes presented information and grant opportunities from the Montana Arts Council. Ms. Holmes stated that per the Bureau of Economic Analysis, arts and creative industry is the sixth largest industry in Montana. In 2022, Montana's creative industries contributed \$2.2 Billion to Montana's economy.

Ms. Holmes explained that the Montana Arts Council can help with grants and awards, programs and arts learning opportunities, and assistance to the field. She stated the Montana Arts Council provided grants to individual artists and to arts organizations. Ms. Holmes stated they offer strategic investment grants which are grants up to \$1000 for artists. This is a rolling grant, but the money has been spent for this fiscal year; however, she said if the project will be taking place after July 1, 2024, to make application now. Ms. Holmes stated the application can be found on their website at [art.mt.gov](http://art.mt.gov).

Ms. Holmes stated other programs offered is the Montana Circle of American Masters which celebrates mastery in a folk or traditional art form, and the folk & traditional arts apprenticeship program which will help pass along the art form to an apprentice. The deadline for folk & traditional arts apprenticeship application is June 17, 2024.

Ms. Holmes discussed other programs offered by the Montana Arts Council.

**02:14:38** Commissioner Backbone stated that Chairman Gray asked him to be Acting Chair for the afternoon portion of the meeting and Vice-Chair Finley was not in attendance.

**FY 2023 Indian Equity Fund (IEF) Recipient**

02:15:25 Emily Mayer, owner of Havre Historic Tours and FY 2023 IEF grant recipient, talked about her business and how the grant has assisted her.

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

02:23:34 TJ Altekruze provided the OICED program update.

Mr. Altekruze reported some of the staff attended the 2024 Governor's Conferenced on Tourism held in Missoula on April 14 – 16, 2024. Some staff also attended the Native American Business Summitt held in Billings April 4, 2024, and the 2024 Spring MEDA Conference held in Red Lodge on April 23 – 25, 2024.

Mr. Altekruze reported on the previous cycle of the Tribal Business Development Grant funding was awarded to Northern Cheyenne. The final cycle of the TBDG funding application period ended on April 30, 2024, and the Department of Commerce's review of the TBDG is scheduled for May 9, 2024.

**Update on HB19**

02:32:54 Mr. Altekruze reported that regarding HB19, there has been weekly engagement with the State Information Technology Services Division to develop a customer-facing dashboard that shows the economic contribution of Montana's Tribes. He will also be updating the STED Commission and the State Tribal Relations Committee. He reported the upcoming goals will be to identify specific data from each Tribe that will be reflected within the dashboard and collect the data and filter it into our portal to be displayed via a dashboard and presentable within a physical report.

**FY 2023 Indian Equity Fund (IEF) Recipient**

02:37:35 Stacey Moore, owner of Mobile Coffee and FY 2023 IEF grant recipient, talked about her business and how the grant has assisted her.

**Big Sky Decon**

02:48:00 Jason Gardiner and Max Gardiner discussed their business, Big Sky Decon. They explained that Big Sky Decon manufactures products designed to decontaminate high-touch surfaces, area, and items. They use high-intensity UV-C designed to mitigate microorganisms of concern. Each product uses UV-C irradiation to destroy the physical structure of DNA/RNA genomes of bacteria, viruses, and molds present on objects and surfaces. They are currently only selling their products to government agencies.

**Tribal Tourism Report**

03:29:12 Rachelle Brown provided the OICED Tribal Tourism update. Ms. Brown reported there have been 38 Production Assistant Training Scholarships awarded and there are 42 scholarships remaining. Ms. Brown reported the Made in Montana (MIM) Tradeshow was held on March 8 – 9, 2024. There were four exhibitors in the Native American Made in Montana Pavilion. Ms. Brown reported she attended the Montana Governor's Conference on Tourism & Recreation was held on April 14 – 16, 2024. Ms. Brown also reported she attended the Great American West IRU (International Round Up) Tradeshow in Casper, Wyoming on April 20 – 23, 2024 with Derek DesRoiser from Sun Tours, LLC.

Ms. Brown reminded the STED Commission the FY2025 Indian Equity Fund Tribal Tourism Small Business Grant is expected to be open October 2024.

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

03:54:45 Luke Robinson provided the OICED IEF and NABA Program update. The IEF is for start-up and existing businesses allowing up to \$14,000 in grant funds. Mr. Robinson reported this last year they received 85 applications. They awarded 26 grants, which they usually award 24, but they split one \$12,000 award between two businesses. Mr. Robinson explained the applications for the IEF grant program will run July 1 – August 31, 2024.

Mr. Robinson explained the NABAs help businesses with technical assistance, loan applications for commercial loans, credit counseling, application assistance for the IEF small business grant. NABAs receive a \$20,000 grant from OICED and the application is open from June 1 - June 30, 2024.

**Other Business**

04:00:12 Marilyn Willson explained that the next STED Commission meeting is scheduled to be held on August 7, 2024. However, the Native American Development Corporation (NADC) scheduled their Native Econ conference during that time and would like us to attend. After discussion, the Commission changed the next STED Commission meeting to August 28, 2024.

04:01:07 Chairman Gray stated he was concerned that some commissioners were not regularly attending STED Commission meetings, and that the Blackfeet STED Commissioner position was still vacant. Chairman Gray asked if there are attendance requirements to maintain a STED Commission position.

04:05:55 Chairman Gray suggested contacting the Blackfeet Tribe and ask them to nominate someone for the STED Commission position. The other commissioners agreed. Commissioner Blasdel stated he would look into it.

**Adjournment**

04:06:50 The meeting was adjourned at 2:54 p.m.