

## **MHA Drone Project Advisory Board Meeting**

Monday, February 6, 2024, 12:00 PM

Zoom <https://und-hipaa.zoom.us/j/95288033377>

**MHA Drone Staff in Attendance:** Kerry Hartman (NHS College, PI), Rylee Dahlen (UND Master's student/Graduate Assistant), Devon Headdress (UND pre-med student/staff), Thomasine Heitkamp (UND PI, Research & Economic Development), Sheila Hanson (UND Assessment Coordinator, Nistler College of Business & Public Administration), Landon Johnson (Use Case and BVLOS Implementation Team Coordinator, Northern Plains UAS Test Site), and David Flynn (Economic Analysis, Nistler College of Business & Public Administration).

**Advisory Board Members in Attendance:** Jared Eagle (Health Administrator, Elbowoods Memorial Health Center), Charlie Moran (Cultural Guide/Hidatsa Language Instructor), Tanya Sand-Driver, (Director TAT GIS/Water Resources), Morgan Berquist (Science and Tech MHA Nation representing Lisa Lone Fight), Blanche Hunts Along (South Segment/Coordinator of Events), Elizabeth Yellow Bird, (Court Administrator, MHA Nation), Sheldon Standish (MHA Legal Department).

The advisory board convened at noon.

The project board and advisory board members introduced themselves.

Thomasine Heitkamp summarized that the project goal is to effectively use drones to meet the needs of the MHA nation. She thanked advisory board members for their participation. With the tribe as the leader, the focus of the grant is on medication delivery. Jared Eagle was influential in planning the grant with discussions of delivering medications between New Town and Twin Buttes. Only about 15% of the applicants to the DOT SMART grant program received funding, so it is a significant achievement.

The advisory board members were asked to update their bios in the Excel spreadsheet.

The project team involved in the World Cafes provided a brief report on the recent World Cafes on January 22-23, 2024 where we gathered information about community perceptions and needs. A TAT GIS/Water Resource representative was at all the sessions. They shared the work they were doing and provided information and context. In the future, rather than World Cafes, we will likely call them listening sessions. Evening meetings may work better than daytime. The need for continued educational outreach was underscored.

The GIS/Water Resources group has been very involved with drones for the past five years. Recently, the focus has been on farm and pasture lands. For example, they have a grant to implement a drone program to monitor noxious weeds with funding from the US Dept of Interior. They also use drones for construction management to monitor heat loss, property inspections, and security. Related to the current grant, they are doing more work with Air Space

Link to assist in med delivery, but also drone traffic, in general, so they will know what is occurring with drones at MHA Nation.

Thomasine Heitkamp reported that one of the goals of this project is to implement BVLOS and to connect with the Vantis network to their Tribal lands of MHA Nation. BVLOS will allow more options for drone use at MHA.

Sheila Hanson stated that we would like to continue to learn about community perceptions. We want advisory board ideas. We also want feedback on what we might try in the future and gather input about this project. The goal is how to best engage the Tribal members.

Elizabeth Yellow Bird suggested the development and distribution of flyers describing the current grant and drone project. She indicated that it would also be helpful to have general information on drones, types of drones, and their uses. Elizabeth suggested project flyers at future World Cafes. She stated that not only older individuals but also children and grandchildren need information. As far as content, what kind of drones? Where they are being used? Who operates them?

Sheila Hanson described the packets that were provided at recent World Cafes. Thomasine Heitkamp has project summaries that could be made available to this group, and we have discussed putting them on a publicly available web page located at NHS College.

Tanya Sand-Driver commented on the community engagement in World Cafes. She senses that people are not ready to discuss medical delivery before their questions are answered. GIS works for the tribe and all the departments in the tribe, so it is critical to educate the community. They do have a flier and have several various types of drones. She thinks the drone camps are a good opportunity to share fliers. In future community sessions, Tanya suggested that it would be helpful to direct the discussion, specifically on medical delivery since that is the focus of the project use case.

Kerry Hartman stated that we could focus on community meetings held by each segment and other meetings and bingo with fliers and maybe with a drone and ask the community leader for 10-15 minutes and we could let them know TAT is leading this project. He stated that we need more communication with the tribal members and are searching for ways to do this best.

Sheldon Standish suggested that we reach out to each tribal leader for their segment and give them a brief rundown of the project and the benefits to the tribe and their segment. He raised the issue that if the focus is on Twin Buttes to New Town, then we must figure out how this can assist all segments.

Kerry Hartman responded that our mission following Jared Eagle's idea is to transport medication from New Town to Twin Buttes. Second missions could include White Shield and Mandaree and other uses. Kerry Hartman suggested that the whole tribe could benefit from policies, maps, and procedures for the use of drones as the Tribe expands opportunities for all.

Jared Eagle, Sheldon Standish, Blanche Hunts Along, and Kerry Hartman, all have good points. Twin Buttes is going to hear about this and be impacted, and maybe not those other towns quite yet. The intended outcome is to support all the field clinics. Three of them are more than 30 miles away from the main clinic in New Town. Two are across the river.

Kerry Hartman clarified that this grant is for planning purposes and hopes the tribe will apply for a larger, long-term grant to allow for infrastructure, laws, and policy development to build infrastructure. He again asked for everybody's input, especially on medical delivery as the main goal.

Kerry Hartman asked Tanya Sand-Driver to clarify current laws and regulations for flying drones on the reservation. Tanya said flying drones is the “Wild West” right now. They fly anywhere and don’t check in or get approval. There are only three airports, and some are unmanned. Her office is implementing the Air Space Link portal and working on a list and files of protected areas. She mentioned who owns the air space -- the landowner and 500 ft above the tallest structure.

Kerry Hartman described the Vantis network using the analogy of cell phone towers. Landon Johnson described that radar providing 20 miles of nautical coverage covers a lot of land. There are 3 radar radio installations in the Watford City/Williston area. There is potential for the tribe to expand this system. The project is evaluating the most efficient placement. The implementation task will take a year and a half. Input from MHA will help prioritize test uses.

David Flynn described his work in economic growth and economic development. He is working on an initial economic impact model that will be shared with the Advisory Board. He reported that he will have a draft completed by next week.

Thomasine Heitkamp suggested that advisory board members should also feel free to contact Prairie Rose Seminole with any questions or thoughts on the project and provided her email address in the chat. (She was unable to attend the meeting as she was attending a funeral but asked Thomasine to share her contact information).

Thomasine Heitkamp provided an update for the Workforce Development group and summarized the successful drone camp on October 20 during the 2023 teacher’s convention with representation from all the segments. There was discussion around the next drone camp and collaborating with the nature camp. Prairie Rose has suggested consideration of offering the drone camp at White Shield. Holding camps in other segments would give more exposure. We need to formalize that date and all advisory board members are invited.

Offering a tour of the MNOC near Grand Forks was discussed. This is an opportunity to see the headquarters of the BVLOS Vantis network operations. Timeout/Wacipi around April 19<sup>th</sup> was one option raised for a time. Tanya Sand-Driver indicated that they will not be available on April 19<sup>th</sup> but requested a tour before then. She would like to bring her staff and others from Natural Resources. Thomasine Heitkamp added that there could be both technical (March or end of Feb) and advisory board tours. Landon Johnson will arrange a date and time.

Related to Workforce Development, Kerry Hartman reported that there are training needs for pilots and repair people. The college is looking at the curriculum and would like to offer a certificate program.

Kerry Hartman also thanked the advisory board members and asked them to continue giving us ideas. We will proceed with the fliers, information in newspapers, and community meetings. He reported that Prairie Rose Seminole has been working on a website and that it will soon be up and running.

Sheldon Standish raised the question about developing laws and preparing to implement them. Tanya responded that there is a policy and procedure draft of the GIS data ordinance. They had work groups from the department heads and worked with the FFA information from 2004 for the tribal consultation with the airspace. [FAA Regulation](#) When she is done with everything, she will take it for resolution.

Charlie Morin inquired if a drone ever made it across from New Town to Twin Buttes and back during different kinds of weather. Tanya Sand-Driver said no - BVLOS would allow more capacity to do this. However, they could have a boat if they could see the drone. Kerry Hartman added that a test run is the goal of this project.

The meeting adjourned at 1 pm.

Submitted by Sheila Hanson and Thomasine Heitkamp