

## MINUTES

Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Arkansas  
Pillow-Thompson House  
718 Perry Street  
Helena-West Helena, Arkansas  
10:30 a.m., November 7, 2011

### **Commissioners Present**

Joe St. Columbia  
Bobby Kennedy  
Carole Bulloch  
Garland Hayes  
Terri Austin McCullough  
Phyllis Stinson  
Molly Houseworth Jackson  
Bob Ware  
Ron Killingsworth

### **Commissioners Absent**

Lois Boyd

### **Technical Advisors/Department Staff/ Guests Present**

Nancy Clark, Great River Road Division Director  
Marla Crider, Arkansas Department of Parks & Tourism  
Dr. Ruth Hawkins, Executive Director, Delta Byways Regional Tourism Association  
Paula Miles, Delta Byways Regional Tourism Association  
Kim Williams, Travel Writer, Arkansas Department of Parks & Tourism  
Julia Hart, Arkansas Highway & Transportation Department  
Arnell Willis, Mayor, Helena-West Helena  
Don Gentry, Phillips County Judge  
Katie Herrington, Delta Cultural Center  
Paula Oliver, Delta Cultural Center  
Mellissa Martinez, *The Daily World*, Helena-West Helena

### **Call to Order**

Chairman Joe St. Columbia called the meeting to order, and thanked everyone for taking time from their busy schedules to participate in the meeting of the Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Arkansas.

### **Special Guests**

Chairman Joe St. Columbia introduced the Honorable Arnell Willis, Mayor of Helena-West Helena, who welcomed the Commission and thanked them for holding the meeting at the Pillow-Thompson House. He said that tourism was very important to the economic growth in Helena-West Helena, and much work was in progress for the sesquicentennial celebration of the Civil War. Many tourists are expected to visit the area during the coming months and years. He also said he and his constituents were looking forward to the new welcome center which is on the drawing board.

Chairman St. Columbia introduced the Honorable Don Gentry, Phillips County Judge who reiterated Mayor Willis' comments about tourism being important to the economic growth of Helena-West Helena and Phillips County. He also expressed his appreciation to the Commission for holding the meeting in Helena-West Helena.

#### **Introduction of New Commissioner**

Chairman Joe St. Columbia introduced Ron Killingsworth from Forrest City, recently appointed by Governor Mike Beebe to represent St. Francis County on the Mississippi River Parkway Commission. He welcomed Ron to the commission and meeting.

#### **Introduction of New Great River Road Director**

Nancy Clark, Great River Road Director said that she would be retiring on November 30, 2011, and Marla Crider has been selected as the new Great River Road Director beginning December 1, 2011. Ms. Clark stated the Ms. Crider worked for the Department of Parks and Tourism several years ago as the Group Travel Manager, and recently worked for Garvan Woodland Gardens in Hot Springs.

#### **Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting**

**Terri Austin McCullough moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting. Carole Bulloch seconded and the motion carried.**

#### **Reflections on the Annual National Mississippi River Parkway Commission Meeting Held in Little Rock**

Nancy Clark presented each Commissioner with a copy of the annual report which was submitted to the National office, and presented by Chairman Joe St, Columbia at the national meeting in Little Rock, September 29--October 1, 2011. She also distributed copies of the thank you letters sent to various organizations and individuals who helped make the meeting a success. Representatives from all 10-Great River Road states attended the meeting with a total registration of approximately 100.

Commissioner Terri McCullough said the hospitality suite--themed "King Cotton" was a big hit. The decorations worked beautifully, and the food provided by Commissioners and Technical Advisors was outstanding. All the delegates were really pleased.

Commissioner Phyllis Stinson complimented Commissioner Carole Bulloch for her decorating expertise and for bringing the table decorations for the closing banquet. They were wonderful, and everyone admired them.

Commissioner Garland Hayes stated he really liked the certificates presented by the national office, and asked if the Arkansas Commission could have some with a similar design. Nancy Clark said she would ask staff artist Max Gilbert to create the certificates.

Commissioner Carole Bulloch thanked Commissioner Bob Ware for his help with returning all the table decorations to Monticello and Garland Hayes for coordinating a rendition of "Mississippi Mud" at the banquet. Commissioner Lois Boyd led the dancing, and it was a hit with the audience.

Chairman Joe St. Columbia reminded Commissioners that Dr. Ruth Hawkins received "The Distinguished Service Award" from the National Commission. She serves as co-chair for the Cultural and Heritage Committee, and wrote and edited the Great River Road Interpretive Centers Tool Kit among many other accomplishments. Chairman St. Columbia said Dr. Hawkins is an inspiration for all, and richly deserves the award. He congratulated Dr. Hawkins on behalf of the Commission, and declared the meeting in Little Rock a huge success.

### **Delta Byways Report**

Dr. Ruth Hawkins reported on the cemetery information collected by the members of the Commission. She said it was voluminous, and that she spent a lot of time trying to figure out how to best present it. She distributed copies of a draft of her proposal, *Final Destinations: The Arkansas Delta Byways Tombstone Trail*. The draft includes cemeteries and burial sites from each of the fifteen counties in the region which provide a glimpse into some of these final destinations. There are more than 700 documented cemeteries, plus countless other family and private burial grounds in the 15-county Delta Byways region in eastern Arkansas. Dr. Hawkins asked that everyone read the draft and send any comments by the end of November.

Dr. Hawkins said the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Delta Awards would be held at the Arkansas State University Cooper Alumni Center on February 17, 2012. Awards will be presented to individuals and organizations recognizing their tourism achievements in Eastern Arkansas's Delta Byways Region.

### **Geocaching Report**

Chairman St. Columbia asked Kim Williams to report on the Great River Road geocaching projects.

Kim Williams reported that as of November 4, 2011, the Great River Road caches throughout the Delta had been found a total of 1,701 times, up from 1,612 in August. As of November 4, the Great River Road Power Trail caches (located in Chicot and Desha counties) have been found a total of 4,273, up from 4,009 in August. Ms. William commented that this is significant because the caches have only been in place for seven months. Copies of the report, which included comments from the cachers, were distributed to the Commissioners.

### **Resolution for Eva Hollowell**

Chairman Joe St. Columbia stated that Ron Killingsworth replaced Eva Hollowell on the Commission, and said he felt a resolution for Eva's dedicated service and contributions to the Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Arkansas was in order.

**Bobby Kennedy moved to approve a resolution for Eva Hollowell.  
Bob Ware seconded and the motion carried.**

### **National Scenic Byways**

Nancy Clark presented copies of letters written by Department of Parks & Tourism.

Executive Director Richard Davies to Senator Mark Pryor and other members of the Arkansas Congressional delegation asking them to oppose Senator John McCain's amendment to prohibit using federal dollars on scenic byways and transportation enhancement projects,

Copies of the Scenic Byways map produced by the Federal Highway Administration were presented to Commissioners.

Julia Hart, Arkansas Highway & Transportation Department, told the Commission the Arkansas Scenic Byways Program was established shortly after Congress passed the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991. This federal legislation created the framework to develop a network of National Scenic Byways and All American Roads. The Act also encouraged each state to develop its own scenic byway program. The Arkansas Highway Commission adopted criteria by which routes in Arkansas could be designated Arkansas Scenic Byways, and become eligible to seek national designation. Ms. Hart presented copies of the criteria. Arkansas's portion of the Great River Road was designated a national scenic byway in 2002.

#### **Miscellaneous**

Nancy Clark presented copies of an article featuring the Arkansas Great River Road in *Southern Living* magazine. Travel Writer Kim Williams assisted the writers while they were traveling the Arkansas Great River Road.

Nancy Clark said Arkansas.com has a new category, *Chefs*, featuring Arkansas chefs. Abby Houseworth (Commissioner Molly Houseworth's sister) is one of the featured chefs. She is a graduate of the French Culinary Institute in New York and is the executive chef at Bristo Eleven 21 in Blytheville.

Chairman Joe St. Columbia said a date for the next meeting should be discussed. It was the consensus of opinion that the next meeting should be held on Wednesday morning in West Memphis following the Governor's Conference on Tourism. Several commissioners said they planned to attend the Conference which will be held March 4-6, 2012. The meeting was set for 9 a.m. on March 7, 2012.

The meeting adjourned, and lunch was served in the Pillow-Thompson House dining room hosted by Joyce and Joe St. Columbia.

Respectfully submitted:

---

Joe St. Columbia, Chairman  
Mississippi River Parkway Commission  
Division

---

Nancy Clark, Director  
Great River Road