

Minutes

Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Arkansas
Holiday Inn West Memphis
2007 S. Service Road
West Memphis, AR
March 7, 2012

Commissioners Present

Joe St. Columbia, Chairman
Carole Bulloch
Bobby Kennedy
Bob Ware
Phyllis Stinson
Terri Austin McCullough
Molly Houseworth Jackson

Commissioners Absent

Lois Boyd
Garland Hayes
Ron Killingsworth

Technical Advisors/Department Staff/Guests Present

Dr. Ruth Hawkins, Executive Director, Delta Byways Regional Tourism Association
Julia Hart, Arkansas Highway & Transportation Department
Marla Crider, Great River Road Division Director
Dottie Boyles, Arkansas Department of Parks & Tourism

Call to Order

Chairman Joe St. Columbia called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m. on Wednesday, March 7, 2012.

Approval of the Minutes from the Previous Meeting

Minutes from the previous meeting were approved.

National Scenic Byways

Technical Advisor Julia Hart reported that the National Scenic Byways program may be eliminated in the upcoming Congressional Transportation Bill. The America Byways Resource Center was defunded and will be closing June 1, 2012. There is a workshop on Corridor Management Plan Update planned for April 16, 2012. Byway Specialist Rob Balmes, Duluth, MN, will be leading the workshop.

The Commission asked Marla Crider to compile a press release concerning the economic impact to communities along the scenic byways if the program is eliminated.

Delta Byway Report

Delta Byways Executive Director Ruth Hawkins reported the Cemetery Trail Brochure has been completed and is now in the hands of the graphic artists at Arkansas State University.

The Johnny Cash Birthday Celebration is scheduled for October 5, 2012. The King Biscuit Blues Festival in Helena-West Helena is scheduled October 4-6. Arkansas State University will look at a way of promoting both events. There has been a lot of media attention surrounding the 80th Birthday of Johnny Cash.

Arkansas Tourism Tax Collections

Marla Crider reported on the Tourism Tax collections for the Delta Region. There has been a growth pattern in several counties.

Mississippi River Country – Federal Grant Application

A several million dollar matching grant has been applied for to continue the Japanese tourism program. If the grant is accepted the money will be applied towards social media and apps specializing in the Japanese market.

Per Diem Rate

Carole Bulloch moved the Commission to approve the \$60.00 Per Diem. Phyllis Stinson seconded the motion carried.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Enhanced Corridor Study – Public Meetings

Chairman St. Columbia announced the public meetings for the Enhanced Corridor Study will be held at the Phillips County Chamber of Commerce from 4:00-6:00 p.m. on March 7, 2012, and again on March 8, at the Forest City Civic Center from 4:00-6:00 p.m.

Fort Curtis Dedication

The date for the Fort Curtis Ribbon Cutting has been changed to 12:00 p.m. on May 11, 2012. Governor Mike Beebe has been invited to attend the event.

MRPC Strategic Planning Session

Chairman Joe St. Columbia, Terri Austin McCullough, and Dr. Ruth Hawkins will be attending the Mississippi River Parkway Commission Strategic Planning Session to be held in St. Louis, MO on March 30, 2012. Chairman St. Columbia stated this will be a one day event.

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Helena/West Helena Welcome Center

Marla Crider stated the Helena/West Helena Welcome Center should be completed by May 2013, but could be later depending on unexpected delays. Access to the Welcome Center will be easier. The facility is more modern and up to date.

The next meeting for the Mississippi River Parkway Commission will be held in Helena/West Helena on May 11, 2012.

The meeting adjourned at 9:13 a.m.