

Minutes

**The Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Arkansas
Pillow-Thompson House
718 Perry Street
Helena-West Helena, Arkansas
January 30, 2007**

Commissioners Present

Robin McClendon
Garland Hayes
Bobby Kennedy
James Banks
Joe St. Columbia
Eva Hollowell
Molly Houseworth
Anna Grizzle
Alvin Meyer

Commissioners Absent

Taralou Dunklin

Technical Advisors/ Department Staff/Guests Present

Nancy Clark, Great River Road Division Director
Dr. Ruth Hawkins, Executive Director, Delta Byways Regional Association
Gip Robertson, Technical Advisor
Julia Hart, Arkansas Highway & Transportation Department
Paula Miles, Delta Byways Regional Association

Special Order of Business

Chairman Robin McClendon asked members of the Commission and friends to gather in the Pillow-Thompson House parlor in order to present a resolution to Ruby Eason in honor of her late husband, John Eason, who served on the Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Arkansas and also served as an Arkansas State Representative.

Call to Order

Chairman Robin McClendon called the meeting to order, and thanked everyone for taking time from their busy schedules to attend the meeting of the Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Arkansas. Julia Hart with the Arkansas Highway & Transportation Department was re-introduced as the Scenic Byways Coordinator.

Approval of the Minutes from the Previous Meeting

Garland Hayes moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting. Joe St. Columbia seconded and motion carried.

Per Diem for 2007—Act 1650 of 2001

Nancy Clark explained that Arkansas Act 1650 of 2001 (which amended Act 1211 of 1995) sets the per diem for the Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Arkansas at \$60 per meeting day. Ms. Clark said that a vote must be taken at the first meeting in the calendar year to re-establish the per diem rate for each commission for 2007, and to authorize travel reimbursement not to exceed the rate established for state employees. Ms. Clark said the Commission could vote to lower the rate of per diem, but not raise it.

Joe St. Columbia moved to establish the per diem rate at \$60.00 per Commission meeting, and to authorize the reimbursement of travel Expenses for each board member performing official duties with the reimbursement not to exceed the rate established for State employees. Eva Hollowell seconded and the motion carried.

Semi-Annual Meeting of the Mississippi River Parkway Commission

Robin McClendon reported that the Semi-Annual Meeting of the National Mississippi River Parkway Commission will be held in Little Rock, Arkansas on February 21-24, 2007. The theme for the meeting is "Mississippi River Parkway Commission—Working to Influence a Spirit of Entente." Ms. McClendon said several sites in Little Rock were discussed as potential places for tours and meals, and the Clinton Presidential Center and the Old State House were chosen for Thursday and Friday evenings, respectively. Nancy Clark reported that arrangements have been made for the DoubleTree to be the host hotel.

The theme for the hospitality suite is "Rocking in the Rock," following the theme that Jonesboro used for the host city early bird event for the Governor's Conference in 2006. Ladies wore poodle skirts and various contests were held such as blowing the largest bubble gum bubble and hula hoops. Everyone had a good time either participating or cheering on the contestants.

Nancy Clark reported that she had contacted Suzanne Michell to play the piano during the reception at the Clinton Center at the suggestion of Julia Hart. She also said that the Old State House Museum would have staff in period costume to direct the tour before dinner is served.

The spouses' tour will include shopping at the Little Rock malls, a driving tour of Little Rock, and a tour and lunch at the Arkansas Arts Center. Carol Meyer and Betty Kennedy volunteered to help with the transportation.

Garland Hayes moved to approve payment of the registration fees and travel expenses for Commissioners, and registration fees only for Technical Advisors to attend the Semi-annual Meeting of the National Mississippi River Parkway Commission to be held February 21-24, 2007, in Little Rock, Arkansas. Anna Grizzle seconded and the motion carried.

Delta Byways Regional Tourism Association Report

Dr. Ruth Hawkins reported that Delta Byways met in Monticello earlier in January. She said that the region adopted changes to their current logo to match the logo for the 3-year Rural Heritage Development Initiative. The annual Delta Byways Banquet has been held in October for several years, and consideration is being given to changing it to January because of all the festivals and football games, etc. in October.

Dr. Hawkins said Gretchen Sacotnik represented Delta Byways at the McAllen International Travel Show in January. She reported that over 11,000 people attended the show which was up 10% from the previous three years. Gretchen ran out of brochures and so did several other vendors. There was a strong showing of attendees from the mid-western states and Canada.

Dr. Hawkins also said the crop brochures may be printed in time for the annual meeting in Little Rock. A discussion ensued regarding printing a rack card to publicize the Web site for Arkansas's portion of the Great Birding Trail. The card would be printed in conjunction with the new edition of the Delta Byways brochure.

A discussion ensued regarding the "arch" at Blytheville, and how to save it. Gip Robertson suggested going on record as to the importance of the arch to the Great River Road. Nancy Clark said a letter had been written to Dan Flowers, Director of the Arkansas Highway & Transportation Department, stating the Commission's position regarding preserving the arch.

Update on Rural Heritage Development Initiative (RHDI)

Dr. Ruth Hawkins reminded the Commissioners that the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Rural Heritage Development Initiative (RHDI) is a three-year project, funded through a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, to implement preservation-based economic development strategies in two rural pilot regions—a fifteen-county region in the Arkansas Delta and an eight-county region in central Kentucky. She updated the Commission on recent activities of RHDI which is working in cooperation with the fifteen counties of Arkansas Delta Byways Regional Association. Dr. Hawkins said the Arkansas program will focus on five key program areas: (1) heritage tourism; (2) local entrepreneurial business and product development; (3) regional branding and marketing; (4) building preservation and property development and (5) preservation education. She also said that restoration projects for Blytheville's Greyhound Bus Station and Kress Building are in progress as well as Helena's Centennial Baptist Church. The Church has recently received a \$300,000 grant from Save America's Treasures.

Dr. Hawkins said a "soft opening" is scheduled for Lakeport Plantation in May, 2007. She said they were working with the same museum consultant who designed the Mill City Museum in Minneapolis, Minnesota which most of the Commissioners had visited. The grand opening for Lakeport is schedule for October, 2007.

Commission Meeting Schedule

Chairman Robin McClendon asked for a show of hands for the next Commission meeting to be held on February 24 following the national meeting in Little Rock.

Respectfully submitted:

Robin McClendon, Chairman
Mississippi River Parkway Commission

Nancy Clark, Director
Great River Road Division