

Minutes

**The Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Arkansas
DoubleTree Hotel
424 West Markham Street
Little Rock, Arkansas
February 24, 2007**

Commissioners Present

Robin McClendon
Garland Hayes
Bobby Kennedy
Taralou Dunklin`
Joe St. Columbia
Molly Houseworth
Anna Grizzle
Alvin Meyer

Commissioners Absent

James Banks
Eva Hollowell

Technical Advisors/ Department Staff/Guests Present

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

Call to Order

Chairman Robin McClendon called the meeting to order, and thanked everyone for taking time from their busy schedules to participate in the national meeting of the Mississippi River Parkway Commission which the Arkansas Commission hosted.

Approval of the Minutes from the Previous Meeting

Anna Grizzle moved to approve the minutes from the previous meeting. Taralou Dunklin seconded and motion carried.

Wrap-up of Semi-annual National Mississippi River Parkway Commission Meeting

Chairman Robin McClendon thanked everyone involved with hosting the meeting in Little Rock. She stated that she had heard good comments from the delegates. The meetings went well, the speakers were enjoyable, the social activities were good and the weather was perfect.

Chairman McClendon thanked Dr. Ruth Hawkins and Paula miles for their help with implementing the theme for the hospitality suite ("Rocking in the Rock"). Everyone had a good time either participating or cheering on the contestants for the contests held with hula hoops, etc. She also thanked everyone for gathering all the "goodies" for the bags

Carol Meyer and Betty Kennedy were also thanked for volunteering to help with the transportation for the spouses' tour which included shopping at the Little Rock malls, a driving tour of Little Rock and lunch at the Arkansas Arts Center.

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 they were moving ahead with the Music Heritage Trail, a compact disc will be produced with interviews of Arkansas Delta musicians. Plans are still underway for an African-American Trail and an Agriculture Trail.

Dr. Hawkins said a "soft opening" is scheduled for Lakeport Plantation in May, 2007 with the grand opening scheduled for September 28, 2007.

Dr. Hawkins reported on three applications for scenic byway funds. They include \$25,000 for Crowley's Ridge Parkway and \$25,000 for Arkansas's Great River Road—these funds are to continue with implementation and updating the corridor management plans for both scenic byways. The third application will be sent directly to Ron Draper by March 19th, it is a priority application for the West Memphis Gateway Project. The Great River Road Gateway comes into West Memphis from the north on Highway 77 which goes under an overpass. If the project is approved the monies will be used to clean the concrete and paint it in blue and green with the Great River Road Pilot's Wheel on it. The students in the community design program at the University of Arkansas created the project design.

Dr. Ruth Hawkins said House Bill 1679 was introduced by Representative Chris Thyer from Jonesboro for an appropriation to Arkansas State University for supporting the operational expenses of the Hemingway-Pfeifer House, the Southern Tenant Farmer's Museum, Lakeport Plantation and the Heritage Center. She said that Representatives Kidd, Cash, Patterson, Sumpter, Moore, Smith, Baker and Lovell had also signed on in support as well as Senators Bookout, Critcher, Womack, Thompson, Bryles, and Jeffress. She asked the Commissioners to contact their representatives and senators to support the bill.

Welcome Center Update

Nancy Clark reported that the Arkansas Highway and Transportation will let bids for contracts on the Blytheville Center soon, the Lake Village Center will remain at the same location and the West Memphis Center location is still under consideration.

April Public Listening Session for Improvements to Highways 65 & 82 from Lake Village to the Mississippi River Bridge

Julia Hart reported that a date had not been set for the listening session, but she would let everyone know as soon as it was established. Chairman Robin McClendon said she felt it important that representatives of the Commission attend to support keeping Highways 65 & 82 from Lake Village to the Mississippi River Bridge as the Great River Road National Scenic Byway.

2007 Arkansas Vacation Planning Kit

Nancy Clark distributed copies of the new 2007 Arkansas Vacation Planning Kit to delegates at the national meeting, and presented extras to members of the Commission.

Office of Volunteerism Dollars Report

Nancy Clark said that each year a report is prepared for the Office of Volunteerism. It has a category for commissions, and the hours spent attending meetings and doing for work for the commission is compiled and assigned a value of \$100 per hour. An estimated value of \$144,000 was reported for the Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Arkansas.

Commission Meeting Schedule

Chairman Robin McClendon asked for a show of hands for the next Commission meeting to be held on July 30 before the annual meeting to be held in Quincy, Illinois in September.

Respectfully submitted:

Robin McClendon, Chairman
Mississippi River Parkway Commission

Nancy Clark, Director
Great River Road Division