

State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission
Ozark Folk Center, Mountain View, AR
August 21, 2014

Commissioners Present

LeRoy Dangeau, Chair
Mike Mills, Vice Chair
Steve Arrison
Bill Barnes
Jay Bunyard
Jim Dailey
Danny Ford
Jim Gaston

John Gill
Shash Goyal
Barbara Harvel
Weston Lewey
Bob Knight
Jim Shamburger
Cindy Smith

Commissioners Absent

Billy Lindsey
Ness Sechrest

Montine McNulty
Mike Wilson

Department Staff Present

Richard Davies, Executive Director
Greg Butts, Director, Arkansas State Parks
Joe David Rice, Tourism Director
Marla Crider, Deputy Tourism Director
Cynthia Dunlap, Central Admin. Director
Gloria Robins, Executive Assistant
Jon Brown, Park Operations Manger
Randy Roberson, Planning & Development Manager
Joan Ellison, Public Information Officer
Tracey Morales, Group Travel Manager
Jennifer Neubauer, Research Project Analyst
Kristine Puckett, Tourism Development Manager
Eric Holbrooks, Administrative Specialist, Tourism Division
Kris Richardson, Administrative Specialist, Parks Division
Tom Stolarz, Region 1 Supervisor
Tony Perrin, Region 2 Supervisor
Marcel Hanzlik, Region 3 Supervisor
Grady Spann, Region 5 Supervisor
Jill Rohrbach, Travel Writer
Terry Rutledge, Chief Ranger
John Morrow, Superintendent, Ozark Folk Center State Park
Josh Epperson, Assistant Superintendent, Ozark Folk Center State Park
Tracy King, Superintendent, Bull Shoals-White River State Park
Ed Thomas, Ranger, Bull Shoals-White River State Park

Aristotle

Laura Kirk
Rebecca Buerkle

Whitney Bailey

CJRW

Shelby Woods
Brian Clark
Amy Turpein

Wayne Woods
Joy Phillips

Governor's Office

Clark Hall

Guests

Matt Bell, Harrison CVB
Shane Carter, Clinton National Airport
Justin Cissell, Wilson City Council
John Faulkner, Lawrence Group
Senator Missy Irvin, Mountain View
David Johnson, Lawrence Group
John Johnson, Lawrence Group
Gaylon Lawrence, Lawrence Group
Bill Ott, Eureka Springs Crescent & Basin Hotel
Alan Sims, Little Rock CVB
Norma Sims, Harrison CVB
Jimmy Walker, Wilson City Council

Roll Call

Chair LeRoy Dangeau called the meeting to order at 8:30 am on Thursday, August 21, 2014. Gloria Robins called the roll.

Recognition of Guests / Welcome

Chair Dangeau recognized guests and welcomed all to the meeting. Senator Missy Irvin welcomed the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission (SPRTC) to Mountain View and thanked commissioners for their time and efforts, noting that parks and tourism is a tremendous value to the state for visitors and residents. She reiterated she is a great supporter of state parks which is a key factor for tourism, and will assist the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism (ADPT) in every way possible.

John Morrow welcomed the SPRTC to the Ozark Folk Center (OFC) and said he was glad to host the group. He introduced Josh Epperson, Assistant Superintendent, a valued employee and support to him and the OFC.

Approval of Agenda

Bob Knight moved to approve the agenda as presented. Bill Barnes seconded and the motion carried.

Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting

Steve Arrison moved to approve the Minutes from the July meeting. Danny Ford seconded and the motion carried.

Financial Report – TBA

Cynthia Dunlap presented the year-to-date financial report for the period ended July 31, 2014. The expenditures were: Parks Division, \$5,943,763; including construction and grants; Tourism Division, \$1,396,818; Keep Arkansas Beautiful, \$17,269; Administration Division, \$278,083; and History Commission, \$216,519. Expenditures for the Department totaled \$7,852,452 a decrease of 8.7% over the same period FY14. The year-to-date operating revenue Parks Division totaled \$3,466,776 an increase of 10.0% over the same period FY14; 1/8% Cent Tax \$2,479,153 a decrease of .42% over the same period FY14; and 2% Tax \$1,332,791 an increase of 5.9% over the same period FY14.

Jay Bunyard moved to approve the Financial Report as presented. Weston Lewey seconded and the motion carried.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

US Forest Service

Richard Davies stated that the US Forest Service (USFS) is a valued partner with ADPT with Mount Magazine and Mississippi River State Parks and the many other properties they operate for tourists and visitors in Arkansas. He advised that the USFS is attending a meeting nearby and thought it a good opportunity for the SPRTC to meet the new forest supervisor and staff. John Morrow worked closely with the USFS staff while superintendent at Mississippi River State Park and introduced the USFS staff as follows:

Reggie Blackwell, Forest Supervisor, Ozark/St Francis National Forest

Terry Krasko – Planning and Public Service, Ozark/St Francis National Forest

Jim McCoy – District Ranger, Ozark/St Francis National Forest

Mary Maercklein –Deputy District Ranger, Ozark/St Francis National Forest

Tim Hault – Forest Safety Office, Ozark/St Francis National Forest

Craig McBroom – Tech Support, Ozark/St Francis National Forest

Transition Report

Richard Davies reported that the governor's office has requested ADPT provide a transition report for the new governor providing ADPT history, budget, organization information and updates on any issues and upcoming legislation and/or rule changes. ADPT staff is currently preparing information as requested.

Miscellaneous

Following the SPRTC's May meeting request, Richard Davies reported that the Arkansas Transportation and Highway Department (AHTD) has agreed to complete an asphalt overlay on the state highway from Murfreesboro to the Prairie Creek Bridge (1.5 miles) near the Crater of Diamonds State Park. The AHTD agreed to complete the asphalt overlay portion of project as soon as funding is available.

Davies reported there was a request of the status of the previous Helena-West Helena Welcome Center building as there may be local interest in the facility. He advised he will check with AHTD and report back to Helena-West Helena.

Davies reported that Arkansas Business has distributed its list of most powerful people in Arkansas for 2014. Included in the Tourism industry list is Steve Arrison, Montine McNulty of the SPRTC and Joe David Rice and of ADPT. Joe David Rice stated that Mr. Davies was also included in the list.

Davies reported that Arkansas State University (ASU) had a ribbon cutting ceremony for the Johnny Cash project in Dyess on August 16, which was well attended, including a large number of the Cash family. There were speeches, a letter from Governor Beebe and tours of the Cash family home to kick off the event. In addition, he reported that the Johnny Cash Music Festival was held at ASU on August 15 and featured entertainment by various Country Music Hall of Fame performers. The show paid tribute to Johnny Cash and raised funds for the restoration of Cash's boyhood home and other landmarks in nearby Dyess. Danny Ford noted it was a great event, which sold out with over 7,700 people in attendance.

Davies reported that Keep Arkansas Beautiful has recently celebrated 25 years of service. He distributed a supplement to Arkansas Business outlining the 25 years of Keeping Arkansas Beautiful.

PARKS DIVISION

Proposed CY 2015 Fees & Rates – Public meeting (11:00 am) & Final Approval

A public meeting was held at 11:00 am on August 21, 2014, in the Recreation Room of the Ozark Folk Center to receive public comments on the proposed CY 2015 Fees and Rates for Arkansas State Parks (ASP). There were no comments received at the meeting or during the public comment period. Greg Butts requested final approval for the CY 2015 Fees & Rates for Arkansas State Parks.

Bill Barnes moved to approve the CY 2015 Fees and Rates for Arkansas State Parks. Barbara Harvel seconded and the motion carried.

Hampson Museum – Proposed New Museum Project

Greg Butts reported that in January, 2014, the SPRTC authorized ASP staff to continue discussions with the Lawrence Group (LG) to work out details of partnership with LG relocating the Hampson Archeological Museum to the town square of Wilson, AR. At the May SPRTC meeting preliminary floor plans and construction costs were presented.

Returning with additional information at the August meeting, John Faulkner presented an Economic Impact Study along with a revised floor plan and construction costs for review. LG Architect David Johnson presented the final museum floor plan, advising significant changes to the exterior of the building making the museum more inviting to the public. John Faulkner provided construction and finance costs offering different options for purchase. Greg Butts presented operational budget and comparison costs for the current museum and the proposed museum. Various topics were discussed regarding the opportunity of partnering with LG to construct a new, modern, interactive museum to house the museum's world class collection.

Discussion included how a new museum would impact the local area and tourism of Arkansas. Discussion included promises made to the public during the 1/8th cent Conservation Tax campaign. Discussion included how adding more large capital construction projects affect ASP's ability to effectively maintain the current state park system. After various discussions, some commissioners strongly supported the project and opportunities for tourism while others were hesitant noting ASP has to be able to maintain the current park system to the high standards guests have become accustomed. Greg Butts suggested other options include renovating and expanding at the current museum site, combining the Hampson collection with the Parkin Archeological State Park (32 miles away) or returning the collection to the Hampson family. Butts also noted the Hampson heirs were opposed to moving the collection from Wilson, AR, and the intent of the original deed of gift was for the collection to remain in Hampson. When asked for staff recommendation, Butts suggested a new museum is best for the collection's preservation and the best opportunities for tourism are to build it in Wilson. However, it is the most costly option vs. adding a Hampson exhibit wing at Parkin Archeological State Park. He noted any construction plans would have to be approved by the Arkansas Building Authority.

John Gill moved for the Executive Director to negotiate with the Lawrence Group for the lease with option to purchase of a new Hampson Archeological Museum facility on the City of Wilson Town Square under the terms of Proposal "A" of the Hampson Archeological memorandum dated August 1, 2014, and the terms contained in the memorandum as follows:

Proposal "A" – 5 year lease; Option to buy at lease expiration for \$1.00, with the alternative of paying off the lease balance prior to expiration.

- **5 years @ \$933,633 / year + \$4,668,165 (1.18 times construction cost)**
- **No rent escalator**
- **Estimated interest rate = 4.53%**

Danny Ford seconded the motion. After further discussion, Chair Dangeau called for a vote and the motion passed with Steve Arrison opposed.

Greg Butts clarified the motion that staff will negotiate the terms of the lease agreement and return to SPRTC for final approval.

Jenkins Ferry

Randy Roberson reported that in 2013, the Friends of Jenkins Ferry Battlefield (FOJFB) received a grant from the National Park Service, American Battlefield Protection Program for development of a Battlefield Protection Plan for the Battle of Jenkins Ferry. He reported that the proposed battlefield protection plan has been approved. Recommendation for the next step is to meet with the FOJFB and prepare a plan (to include funding options) to conduct a professional

archeology survey of the battlefield area to determine where the battles took place. This information will greatly improve the understanding of the battlefield. Once this information is identified, land owners in high priority areas will be contacted to seek permission for research and to discuss options for priority battlefield preservation. Best practice for land preservation at Jenkins' Ferry should involve a strategic process of offering a menu of alternative land conservation techniques. The process would focus efforts on private landowners willing to participate as preservation partners. ASP staff will meet with project stakeholders and discuss the importance of battlefield preservation with land owners and the various opportunities to preserve the high priority battlefield area. Funding will be sought through the Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council FY 16 (ANCRC) grant process for research. Staff recommends moving carefully and concentrating on priority land parcels identified by the archeological research.

Steve Arrison moved for the Arkansas State Parks staff to proceed with the battlefield protection efforts as outlined. Jim Shamburger seconded and the motion carried.

Mammoth Spring – Utility Easement Request; Entergy

Randy Roberson reported that Entergy Arkansas has requested an easement from ASP in order to relocate an existing power line as part of AHTD's road widening project on US Highway 63 North in Fulton County. The highway is adjacent to the western boundary of Mammoth Spring State Park with two power poles with existing overhead lines within the park boundary. The two power poles would be relocated slightly east. With no existing easement, Entergy has prepared a new 30' by 260' easement for the proposed relocated line. Staff recommended approval.

Steve Arrison moved to approve an easement from Arkansas State Parks to Entergy Arkansas in order to relocate an existing power line as follows: A strip of land approximately 260' feet long, lying 15' each side of a centerline, lying in the NE Quarter of the NW Quarter, and the NW Quarter of the NE Quarter of Section 8, Township 21 North, Range 5 West, lying in Fulton County, Arkansas, containing 0.18 acres, more or less. Weston Lewey seconded and the motion carried.

Fall TV & Radio Spots

Joan Ellison presented the fall radio and TV spots for review.

**Mike Mills moved to approve the fall TV and radio spots as follows:
Radio Spot (60 second spots)**

**Radio Cut #1: "Think of and Remember" (continue from spring)
Radio Cut #2: "Hiking a State Park Trail in Fall" (new spot)
TV Cut #1: "The Trees of Arkansas's State Parks" (bring back)**

Cindy Smith seconded and the motion carried.

Certificates of Appreciation

Greg Butts requested approval for a certificate of appreciation for the following employees for outstanding service to Arkansas State Parks:

- Keryn Cantrell, Office Manager at Toltec Mounds, with 30 years of service
- Jeanenne Cook, Office Manager at Petit Jean State Park, with 37 years of service
- Burtis Dye, Maintenance Supervisor at Village Creek State Park, with 26 years of service

Steve Arrison moved to approve certificates of appreciation for Keryn Cantrell, Jeanenne Cook and Burtis Dye for outstanding service with Arkansas State Parks. Bill Barnes seconded and the motion carried.

Structure Removals

Randy Roberson reported that the old water treatment facility has been replaced by a new water system at Petit Jean State Park and advised that the water treatment building and associated structures are deteriorated and no longer useful. He reported a tractor shed located at Plantation Agriculture Museum is in severely deteriorated condition. Lastly, Roberson reported a rock and frame structure located at Queen Wilhelmina is severely dilapidated, no longer utilized and has become a safety hazard. Roberson requested that the five structures be removed.

Mike Mills moved to approve based on the information presented; the commission finds the structures obsolete notwithstanding their insured values and approves the removal of the following:

- **Petit Jean State Park:**
 - **Water Treatment Building (Building No. 41.68/AASIS 120006353)**
 - **Water Filter Storage Building (Building No. 41.67/AASIS 120006352)**
 - **Water Plant Building (Building No.41.69/AASIS 120006354)**
- **Plantation Agriculture Museum**
 - **Tractor Shed (Building No. 43.03/AAISS 120006404)**
- **Queen Wilhelmina State Park**
 - **Rock and frame structure (Building No. 46.08/AAISS 120006456)**

Weston Lewey seconded and the motion carried.

Queen Wilhelmina – Lodge Renovation Update

Following the SPRTC's July request, Greg Butts reported that a meeting was held at the Attorney General's (AG) office on August 7 for key parties of the Queen Wilhelmina renovation project to include Travelers' Insurance (TI), Representative Nate Bell (via teleconference), Senator Larry Teague (via teleconference), Dan Honey with the Arkansas Insurance Department, Bill Barnes, Richard Davies, AG, TI attorneys and himself. The meeting was initiated to align focus for a timely completion date. TI committed to making more timely decisions. ASP agreed to do the same. TI has been involved in bi-weekly progress meetings from the beginning of the takeover. Outside that bi-weekly meeting, TI, ADPT staff, Tom Grossclose and Brian Corriveau from TI meets every two weeks to address any issues. Richard Davies requested a list of outstanding issues from TI, complete with costs and resolution dates.

Greg Butts advised there will be an onsite meeting September 12 with all parties to verify things are moving forward as expected. The mold remediation is currently being addressed with test results due August 25. If the current mold remediation plan is not successful, a plan "B" will be ready to implement.

Miscellaneous

Greg Butts advised that the annual Superintendent's Conference will be held at Mount Magazine State Park September 23-25, 2014, and commissioners are invited to attend all or part of the conference. Park awards will be presented during the conference. Contact Kris Richardson if you would like to attend.

Bill Barnes requested that a more lenient pet policy be reviewed for ASP. Greg Butts replied that staff is working on a policy review and will bring it before the SPRTC soon.

TOURISM DIVISION

Dubai; Mall of the World

Joe David Rice informed the Commission that Dubai is currently in the planning stages of building a "Mall of the World," the largest in the world.

Hotels Surge Again in Persian Gulf

Joe David Rice presented an article to the Commission that pertained to major hotel growth in the Persian Gulf.

Print Magazine Sales Decline; Digital Editions Grow

Joe David Rice discussed an article that stated newsstand sales have declined, while digital editions have expanded.

Research and Information Services

Jennifer Neubauer presented the Research and Information Services report, stating that the section processed 12,556 requests for travel information during July 2014, an increase of 31.6% from July 2013. The calendar year 2014 inquiry total is 116,693, up 40.8% from 2013. The Section received 443 requests for retirement and relocation information in July 2014, down 31.7% from July 2013. Arkansas Welcome Centers received 112,049 visitors during July 2014, up 2.3% over last July. Welcome Center calendar year visitation is 480,252, down 3.7% from calendar year 2013.

Neubauer stated that the West Memphis Welcome Center has been in the new location for one year, and the visitation totals are evening out. West Memphis's visitor totals decreased 3,393 over calendar year 2013, due to a lack of signage directing visitors to the center.

Marla Crider informed the Commission that a billboard will soon be placed appropriately to direct visitors to the West Memphis Welcome Center.

Neubauer commented that Helena-West Helena's visitation is up 98% since the new Welcome Center opened on November 19, 2013.

Neubauer stated that the average time spent on the ATT Uverse Arkansas channel was 2:43, and 20,749 Vacation Kits were requested as part of the Engage TV Campaign.

Communications

Joe David Rice informed the Commission that Kat Robinson, Communications Manager, is no longer with Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism; the Tourism Division is currently seeking a new employee for this management position. Robinson left ADPT to pursue personal endeavors.

Tourism Development

Kristine Puckett reported that the Regional Tourist Associations annual meeting is August 22 and 50 people have RSVP'd.

Puckett announced that the Welcome to Arkansas's Secret Shopping program has visited the following towns; Benton, Bentonville, Bryant, Clarksville, De Queen, Eureka Springs, Hardy, Lake Village, Russellville, Siloam Springs, Texarkana, West Memphis. Puckett stated that Clarksville and Lake Village received negative feedback; Benton, Eureka Springs, and West Memphis received average feedback, while Bentonville, Bryant, De Queen, Hardy, Russellville, Siloam Springs, and Texarkana received positive feedback.

Puckett stated that the deadline for the next Feasibility Study Grant is September 26, 2014.

Puckett presented the new Retirement and Relocation Guide, known as the *Living in Arkansas* magazine, to the Commission. She commented that the new guide features an interview which Chuck Haralson, ADPT's Chief Photographer. The cover features Nick and Julia Malinowski of Helena-West Helena.

Puckett presented a picture of the Fall/Winter Calendar of Events to the Commission.

Bill Barnes asked how much time Jessica Ledbetter spends on the Welcome to Arkansas program. Kristine Puckett responded that Scott Sudduth spent 40 hours a week; Jessica has other job responsibilities, and that her time on Welcome to Arkansas fluctuates. Barnes then asked for a rough estimate; she estimated 5-10 hours per week. Marla Crider interjected that it was probably more.

Group Travel

Tracy Morales shared that the Group Travel Section processed 1832 leads for July 2014 YTD, as compared to 783 leads in July 2013 YTD.

Morales reported that the Group Travel Section has given away 6,538 Tour Guides, 9,202 Lapel Pins, and 6,853 Arkansas litter-bags YTD for family reunions, class reunions, conferences, and weddings.

Morales stated that the Pig Trail Scenic Byway won 2nd place as the Best Motorcycle Trip by *USA Today* readers.

Advertising Items

Amy Turpen presented CJRW's 2014 Fall/Winter Television Schedules. The campaign will run in 18 markets. The breakdown of the budget is as follows:

Cable TV – Runs three weeks, September 23-October 19
Average Reach = 77% of adults 25-54
Average Frequency = 3.3
Budget = \$400,196

Broadcast TV – Runs three weeks, September 23 – October 19
Average Reach = 49% of adults 25-54
Average Frequency = 5.3
Budget = \$62,461

Hispanic TV
Northwest Arkansas / Central Arkansas / Dallas, Texas
Budget = \$23,065

Total Budget = \$485, 722

John Gill asked if this was part of the FY 15 budget; Amy Turpen stated that this budget had already been approved by the Commission in May, these were just the details.

Mike Mills moved to approve the 2014 Fall/Winter Television Schedules total budget of \$485,722 as presented to the Commission. Barbara Harvel seconded and the motion carried.

Internet-Related Items

Rebecca Buerkle presented Aristotle's website report to the Commission. She pointed out that the total organic search accounted for 74% of all traffic to the site for the month of July with 646,170 visitor sessions. Mobile traffic increased 7% over July 2013. Mobile traffic was at 55%, while desktop traffic was at 45%. Buerkle informed the Commission that Arkansas.com ranked #5 out of the 50 state tourism websites for July 2014, up one spot from June 2014.

Buerkle shared that the Kids Fun Map on Arkansas.com is launching in a couple of weeks; the landing page will present the 6 newly mapped out regions with icons. Lastly, Buerkle shared how the new website will have shortened tab titles to be more simplistic.

Word changes are as follows:

Places to Go – Go

Things to Do – Do

Deals and Coupons – Value

John Gill suggested changing “do” to “to do.” Buerkle took note of the suggestion.

Miscellaneous

Joe David Rice presented a picture of the Motor Vessel Mississippi towboat that traveled down the Arkansas River in August. The vessel is the largest towboat ever built in the United States. Rice toured the boat while it was at Dardanelle Lock and Dam on August 13 and gave a report to the Mississippi River Commission.

Greg Butts introduced Terry Rutledge as the new Chief Ranger for Arkansas State Parks; Rutledge has been with the Department for four months.

Richard Davies reminded the Commission that the September meeting will be held during the AHA convention in Little Rock. The meeting convenes at 1:30 on Wednesday, September 17 and will conclude after the ad campaign presentation on Thursday morning, September 18.

Adjournment

Bob Knight motioned to adjourn the SPRTC meeting. Steve Arrison seconded and the motion carried.

The SPRTC meeting adjourned at 12:30 pm on Thursday, August 21, 2014, at Ozark Folk Center State Park in Mountain View, Arkansas.