

**State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission
Hilton Garden Inn
Fayetteville, Arkansas
January 15, 2015**

Commissioners Present

Mike Mills, Chair	LeRoy Dangeau
Bill Barnes	Jay Bunyard
Jim Dailey	Danny Ford
John Gill	Shash Goyal
Barbara Harvel	Bob Knight
Weston Lewey	Ness Sechrest
Jim Shamburger	Cindy Smith
Mike Wilson	Mark Givens

Commissioners Absent

Jim Gaston	Montine McNulty
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Department Staff Present

Richard Davies, Executive Director
Cynthia Dunlap, Director of Administration
Greg Butts, Director, Arkansas State Parks
Joe David Rice, Tourism Director
Ron Maxwell, Deputy Tourism Director
Gloria Robins, Executive Assistant
Jon Brown, Park Operations Manger
Randy Roberson, Planning & Development Manager
Leah DiPietro, Communications Manager
Tracey Morales, Group Travel Manager
Kristine Puckett, Tourism Development Manager
Tiffany Knox, Welcome Center Administrator
Jennifer Neubauer, Research Project Analyst
Kris Richardson, Administrative Specialist, Parks Division
Erik Holbrooks, Administrative Specialist, Tourism Division
Tom Stolarz, Region 1 Supervisor
Marcel Hanzlik, Region 3 Supervisor
Shea Lewis, Region 4 Supervisor
Grady Spann, Region 5 Supervisor

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Aristotle

Marla Johnson

CJRW

Shelby Woods
Joy Phillips
Brian Kratkiewicz

Darin Gray
Brian Clark
Bill Fitzgerald

Guest

Kaylene Griffin, Bentonville A&P
Jared Faciszewski, Walton Family Foundation
Bill Ott, Eureka Springs Crescent & Basin
Mike Bishop, Eureka Springs Chamber of Commerce
Marilyn Heiffner, Fayetteville A&P
Claude Legris, Ft. Smith A&P
Jesse Cox, Prairie Grove Battlefield State Park Superintendent
Monte Fuller, Devils Den State Park Superintendent
Betty Ross, Siloam Springs Welcome Center Manager
William Armacost, Bentonville Welcome Center Manager
Larry Foley, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

Roll Call

Chair Mike Mills called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. on Thursday, January 15.
Gloria Robins called the roll.

Welcome

Marilyn Heiffner, with the Fayetteville A&P, welcomed everyone to Fayetteville, and stated that she enjoyed hosting everyone at the Pratt Place Inn for dinner and tour. Heifner stated that she will be retiring soon, but has loved her job and will continue to promote Fayetteville.

Approval of the Agenda

Bob Knight moved to approve the meeting Agenda. Mike Wilson seconded and the motion carried.

Presentation of Minutes from Previous Meeting

Mark Givens moved to approve the Minutes from the November meeting. Jim Shamburger seconded and the motion carried.

Financial Report

Cynthia Dunlap presented the year-to-date financial report for the period ended December 31, 2014. The expenditures were: Parks Division, \$37,007,339; including construction and grants; Tourism Division, \$6,612,172; Keep Arkansas Beautiful, \$261,261; Administration Division, \$1,580,954; and History Commission, \$922,086. Expenditures for the Department totaled \$46,383,812 a decrease of 9.3% over the same period FY14. The year-to-date operating revenue Parks Division totaled \$13,478,015 an increase of 8.0% over the same period FY14; 1/8% Cent Tax \$14,756,877 an increase of 0.64% over the same period FY14; and 2% Tax \$8,037,712 an increase of 7.8% over the same period FY14.

Jim Dailey moved to approve the Financial Report. Shash Goyal seconded and the motion carried.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Richard Davies recognized Mark Givens as the newly appointed Commissioner that has replaced Steve Arrison. Mark Givens is the El Dorado Main Street Director.

2015 Meeting Schedule

Shash Goyal moved to approve the 2015 Meeting Schedule. Barbara Harvel seconded and the motion carried.

January 14-15	Fayetteville
February 18-19	Hot Springs
March	Governors Conference – Texarkana
April 15-16	P. Allen Smith – Little Rock
May 20 – 21	Harrison
June 17-18	Delta Resort – McGehee
July 15-16	Queen Wilhelmina
August 20-21	DeGray State Park

September 15-17
October 14-15
November 18-19

Staff Appreciation Dinner and Service Awards
Little Rock AHA Show
Fort Smith
Eureka Springs

2015 Per Diem

Richard Davies stated by law, the Commission must approve its per diem rate at the first meeting of the calendar year. The per diem approved in 2014 was \$65.00.

Danny Ford moved to set the per diem at \$65.00 per day, plus all expenses incurred on Wednesday for early arrival, to attend meetings for the calendar year 2015. Ness Sechrest seconded and the motion carried.

Legislative Session Update

Richard Davies announced that Billy Lindsey has resigned from the Commission and will start work at Mount Magazine State Park as the Assistant Superintendent.

USFS Wolfe Pen Gap ATV Decision

Richard Davies shared an email from Gar Eisele, Chair of Arkansas Regional Coalition of the Ouachita's regarding the USFS Wolfe Pen Gap ATV decision, "*The result of this decision is that the trails remain open avoiding the economic disaster in our region had they been closed. I feel certain that we would not have reached this result without the help of the Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission's assistance. On January 21st, 2010 the Commission allowed us to present the possible closing of the Wolf Pen Trail System to their meeting in Hot Springs. The Commission passed a resolution in our favor and the resulting publicity put us on our way to saving the trails. Please share these thoughts with the Commission.*"

Bill Barnes stated that the USFS is at the discretion of the local ranger as to when they close it.

Miscellaneous

Claude Legris presented the Commission with updates regarding the Ft. Smith U.S. Marshals Museum. John Gill asked what the construction price is; Legris stated that it is currently \$17 million, and there is a \$52 million endowment that will also cover the 1st year of operation. Legris also informed the Commission that the Holiday Inn in the area has been sold for \$3 million, and it will be announced later the new flagship property. Legris distributed flyers regarding the U.S. Marshals Service Commemorative Coin. He stated that the coins would be

available for purchase within the coming weeks. The first \$5 million in available surcharges are authorized to be paid to help build the U.S. Marshals Museum in Fort Smith, Arkansas.

TOURISM DIVISION

Joe David Rice introduced Ron Maxwell as the new Deputy Tourism Director. Maxwell replaces the late Marla Crider. Maxwell comes to the department from working as the Administrator for the Governor's Mansion for the past eight years, where he managed a dedicated staff, worked within the state budgeting system, and coordinated hundreds of meetings. Maxwell stated that he is eager to get started with the department and looks forward to getting to know everyone.

CJRW Contract

Joe David Rice informed the Commission that it is the staff recommendation to extend the CJRW Contract for 1 year. Arkansas law now requires that the department's advertising agency contract be reviewed annually. Rice stated that the staff came to this one year extension decision for the following reasons:

Calendar year 2014 (January through October) is up by 7.02% over 2013 –and that's well above the national inflation rate of 1.3%. In fact, the most recent report (October 2014) displayed a 15.3% increase over October 2013, making it one of the single best showings since we've been collecting trust fund monies.

CJRW recognizes the role of research in our efforts. The agency has listened closely to the recommendations of Wild Alchemy, our consulting firm, and has incorporated those findings in our campaigns.

The focus groups conducted by Wild Alchemy have determined that our campaign messages are on-target with our most likely demographic segments.

CJRW has played a key role in our "3A" process, the ongoing effort to better serve the public and our constituents by improving communications and operations between CJRW, Aristotle, and the Tourism Division.

CJRW continues to provide strong support in creative, media, public relations, and strategic development. The "added value" from media negotiations alone is worth hundreds of thousands of dollars annually.

Not content with the status quo, the CJRW team has helped us undertake new efforts such as the motorcycling campaign, the *Water & Woods* project, the wedding guide, and our Holiday Hog promotion.

Ness Sechrest moved to extend the CJRW Contract for 1 year. Jim Shamburger seconded and the motion carried.

2015 Arkansas Governor's Conference on Tourism

Joe David Rice expressed to the Commission that many of the ideas that will be seen at the 2015 Conference will be those of the late Marla Crider. Crider had already been hard at work planning for the upcoming Conference before her passing in November of 2014. Rice stated that the media sponsor letters have already gone out. Tracy Morales is working with the area hotels and the organization of meals. Kristine Puckett is organizing the Henry Awards finalist. Tiffany Knox is planning the Auction. Carol Leek, Kerry Kraus and Erik Holbrooks are working with registrations & sponsorships. Finally, save-the-date style postcards are being sent out this year in lieu of the large packets.

John Gill stated that he would like to know some of the individuals who are the recipients of the scholarships handed out by the Arkansas Tourism Development Foundation.

Certificate of Appreciation for Marilyn Heifner

John Gill moved to approve a Certificate of Appreciation for Marilyn Heifner for her years of service with the Fayetteville A&P. Barbara Harvel seconded and the motion carried.

Research & Information Services

Jennifer Neubauer presented the Research & Information Services report to the Commission. The section processed 4,038 requests for travel information during November 2014, a decrease of 84.76% from November 2013. The calendar year 2014 inquiry total is 138,357, down 2.44% from 2013. The decrease in inquiries is most likely attributed to the saturation of the Engage TV market.

There were 654 requests for retirement/relocation information in December, down 26.4% from December 2013. This is due to changes in ordering patterns through the year. The retirement/relocation calendar year inquiry total is 6,552, down 0.8% from calendar year 2013.

Welcome Centers

Tiffany Knox presented the Commission with pictures of the Christmas decorations at the Welcome Centers throughout the state. She reminded the Commission that there is not a state budget for decorations, but each center purchased or made their decorations at their own expense.

Knox shared pictures of special visitors at the Helena and Red River Welcome Centers.

Knox informed the Commission that the Holiday Hog made 18 appearances throughout the state. Knox was the liaison for organizing the logistics & scheduling appearances of the Holiday Hog throughout the Christmas season. She shared that the 2015 season will be even better.

Communications

Leah DiPietro shared media coverage of the Holiday Hog with the Commission; there were blog postings, social media coverage, newspaper articles, and all local TV stations covered the announcement of the name “Jingle.” DiPietro presented two videos of Joe David Rice and “Jingle” on Fox16 and THV11.

DiPietro announced Casey Crocker as the new Multimedia Specialist. Crocker formerly worked for the department several years ago.

The new 2015 Destination Wedding Guide was distributed to the Commission.

DiPietro shared that there was great coverage in the *Ride Texas* publication regarding scenic HWY 7.

DiPietro announced that there were 21 travel writers from North America on the November 2014 Geiger Tour.

John Gill asked how the venues were able to get into the new Destination Wedding Guide. Joy Phillips stated that CJRW and the Communications section chose places based on various styles and great photography.

Tourism Development

Kristine Puckett informed the Commission that the Feasibility Study Grant was put in place to help fund cities and counties looking to start or begin a new tourist attraction. She stated

that Bentonville was awarded \$7,588 for their Convention Center project and Little Rock was awarded \$15,000 for their indoor multi-sport facility.

Group Travel

Joe David Rice announced that the Group Travel section received 2436 leads for December 2014, over 1716 leads for December 2013.

Rice stated that the Travel South International Showcase took place December 1-4 and the Travel South International FAM Tour followed on December 4-7 and presented pictures to the Commission.

Advertising Items

Joy Phillips and Brian Kratkiewicz presented the commission with CJRW's 2015 Spring/Summer Online Media Campaign. Recommendations are as followed:

- TV – 48%, Radio – 7%, Magazine – 23%, Newspaper – 5%, Digital – 15%, OOH – 2%
- Goals: 1. Build awareness – generate completed video views, creative impact through video
2. Increase mobile presence
- New recommended sites: NBC, CNN, Ebay, ABC news
- Undertone: Behavioral targeting of boating, fishing and outdoors. Track behavioral of undertone network website visitors.
- The use of Shazam, which will take people directly to the website using their smartphones, via TV commercials.
- The use of Pandora, which is a digital music service, will target consumers thru music with banner and video ads.
- More mobile, video impact/awareness, programmatic buying for added cost-efficiency
- Extra emphasis on active outdoors, reach/awareness/efficiency

Bill Fitzgerald presented the Commission with CJRW's 2015 Spring/Summer Online Creative Campaign which included several 15 second video spots, along with mobile banner ads.

Jim Shamburger asked about ads on tripadvisor.com, Brian Kratkiewicz stated that the department used to run ads on tripadvisor.com years ago, but didn't perform as well as hoped.

Mark Givens asked if the videos the Commission just viewed were already on the website. Joy Phillips stated they were on the Arkansas YouTube channel.

Shash Goyal asked about the niche market for Hispanics. Joy Phillips stated that the department and CJRW have reached out to the partners at Cinco Media to pick which ads should be translated.

John Gill moved to approve the 2015 Spring/Summer Online Media and Creative Campaign. Jim Dailey seconded and the motion carried.

Larry Foley presented *The First Boys of Spring* trailer to the Commission. The film references the historic baseball trail and baseball spring training which began in 1886 in Hot Springs.

Ness Sechrest moved to approve \$5,000 of the advertising budget be allocated to help fund *The First Boys of Spring*. Shash Goyal seconded and the motion carried.

Arkansas Made will be an 80-page booklet that will be distributed to the Welcome Centers. The department would like to form partnership with Arkansas Times to publish this booklet. 30,000 copies will be made, with a cost of \$12,000 and a publication date of October 2015.

Leroy Dangeau moved to approve the partnership with Arkansas Times. Cindy Smith seconded and the motion carried.

Internet-Related Items

Marla Johnson announced to the Commission that the website redesign is underway, with the launch process beginning on January 15, 2015. Johnson informed the Commission that the website will go live January 19, 2015. "Less is more" is the moto for the new redesign of the website.

Johnson reported that Arkansas.com had 310,566 visitor sessions in December 2014. Johnson reported that there were over 6 million visitor sessions from January – December 2014, these were the highest numbers ever, with an increase of 2.9% over 2013.

Traffic generated thru Arkansas.com was as followed: 74% - organic search, 10% - direct search, 8% - paid, 5% - referral, 0.8% - social, 0.6% - email.

Mobile visitors far outnumbered desktop visitors with mobile being 56% and desktop being 44%. Mobile visitation is a trend that has continued to rise.

There were 54,540 clicks to industry partners in December 2014, an increase of 3.6% over December 2013.

For the month of December 2013, the Arkansas.com website fell to number 9 out of the 50 state tourism websites.

PARKS DIVISION

FY 16 ANCRC Grant Request

Randy Roberson presented \$9.8 million of proposed projects submitted by park staff for consideration in the FY 16 Arkansas Natural & Cultural Resources Council (ANCRC) grant request. The list is comprised of 47 projects in 33 parks. The request contains a mix of A-75 projects that are on the 10 year Legacy Plan and non A-75 projects. Some of the projects are a continuation of projects that have been partially funded or the design phase funded by previous ANCRC grants or A-75. Roberson requested approval to submit the list of projects totaling \$9.8 million as presented for the FY 16 ANCRC grant request.

LeRoy Dangeau moved to approve the FY 16 Arkansas Natural & Cultural Resources Council grant request as presented, totaling \$9.8 million in projects for Arkansas State Parks. Weston Lewey seconded and the motion carried.

Proposed Acquisitions

Randy Roberson reported that Arkansas State Parks (ASP) has two proposed property acquisitions for consideration.

A. Powhatan – 1874 Methodist Church

Roberson reported that one proposed acquisition is a donation of the 1874 Greek Revival Methodist Church located in Powhatan, AR. ASP currently owns all the historical structures located in Powhatan (with the exception of the Methodist Church) with each structure representing a different aspect and era of Powhatan. The Episcopal Office of the United Methodists of Arkansas is no longer interested in maintaining and operating the church and has offered to donate the building to ASP. Although it would require renovation, it is a significant piece of history and would be a great addition to PHSP's interpretation of Arkansas history. Roberson advised staff recommends accepting the donation and requested preliminary approval to proceed with the A.C.A. 22-4-106 process.

Cindy Smith moved for preliminary approval to precede with the A.C.A. 22-4-106 process of acquiring the 1874 Methodist Church in Powhatan as follows:

A part of lots 2 and 6, and all of lots 3, 4, and 5, all lying in Block 14 of the original Town of Powhatan, Lawrence County, Arkansas, containing 0.344 acres, more or less.

Barbara Harvel seconded and the motion carried.

B. Pinnacle – Barrett Road Residence, 5 acres

Roberson reported one proposed acquisition is a residence on a five acre tract of land located adjacent to Pinnacle Mountain State Park (PMSP). The 1992 residence contains 2,799 square feet of living space. The three bedroom, two bathroom home would serve as a suitable employee residence and meets ASP requirements. There is a need for employee housing at PMSP. The lot is connected at its southeast corner to PMSP which would help staff manage park natural resources and the horse trails. Roberson advised staff recommends the acquisition and requested approval to proceed with the A.C.A. 22-4-106 process.

Danny Ford moved for preliminary approval to proceed with the A.C.A. 22-4-106 process of acquiring a residence and five acres of land at Pinnacle Mountain State Park as follows:

The East ½ of the East ½ of the Northeast ¼ of the southwest ¼, of Section 4, Township 2 North, Range 14 West Pulaski County, Arkansas contain five acres more or less.

Shash Goyal seconded and the motion carried.

Certificate of Appreciation

Greg Butts requested approval for a certificate of appreciation for Ben Munoz, Heavy Equipment Operator in Region 4, with 29 years of outstanding service to Arkansas State Parks.

Ness Sechrest moved to approve a certificate of appreciation for Ben Munoz for 29 years of service with Arkansas State Parks. Shash Goyal seconded and the motion carried.

Lake Charles – Structure Removal

Randy Roberson reported that the substandard and deteriorated 686 foot circa 1974 “Area C” bathhouse needs to be removed in order to clear the site for the new restroom which is being funded by the FY 15 ANCRC grant. Roberson requested approval to remove the structure.

Shash Goyal moved to approve based on the information presented; the commission finds the structure obsolete notwithstanding its insured value and approves the removal of the 1974 bathhouse (Building No. 24.05/AASIS No. 120005874) from Lake Charles State Park inventory. Mike Wilson seconded and the motion carried.

First Day Hike

Greg Butts reported that this is the third year that ASP has participated in First Day Hike (FDH). FDH is a nationwide initiative led by America's State Parks to get people outdoors with over 400 hikes scheduled this year in all 50 states. Robin Gabe stated that FDH is a nationwide effort where state parks offer a variety of free guided hikes on January 1 and provide a great opportunity for visitors to make a healthy start to the New Year and experience the beauty and history of state parks. She reported that ASP had 34 parks offer 55 hikes resulting in 290 hikers hiking 506 miles throughout Arkansas. ASP numbers were down this year due to rain and cold weather. However, rain did not dampen the enthusiasm of park staffs who offered a variety of hikes including nature, history, activity hikes and more. Gabe noted the annual event is receiving more media coverage each year and visitors are looking forward to the January 1 event each New Year. Gabe showed a PowerPoint of selected parks and hikers.

Hampson Update

Greg Butts provided an update on Wilson City LLC and the Lawrence Group after receiving approval from the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission (SPRTC) in October to proceed with finalizing a lease agreement with purchase option. By the Constitution of the State of Arkansas, purchase options must remain two separate functions. Butts advised after several revisions, an agreement is close to consummation.

Butts reported that Wilson City LLC received a fair market value appraisal for the museum building reflecting \$33 to \$38.50 per square foot. He stated this is a turnkey project and includes many things besides the building. Non-traditional costs include furnishings, construction of exhibits, creation of Native American Mound and more, and account for 28% of the cost. Butts stated that ASP is awaiting appraisal values on the non-traditional costs from Wilson City LLC. In response to expected timeline, Butts advised: 1) consummation of agreement anticipated by end of January; 2) Arkansas Building Authority reviews and approves plans (may be expedited); and 3) construction process approximately one year to complete.

Quarterly Report

Randy Roberson reported that \$56.5 million in projects have been completed or underway with several major projects near final completion.

Miscellaneous

Greg Butts reported that Arkansas Wild publication recognized Joe Jacobs, Manager of Marketing and Revenue, as a Legend of the Wild, noting his advocacy and volunteerism for bicycling in Arkansas.

Superintendent Jessee Cox reported that Prairie Grove Battlefield State Parks is the venue for a Civil War reenactment every two years. He reported a successful event for December 2014 with approximately 5,500 visitors and 600 re-enactors for the two day event. Cox advised the participation and visitation returned to normal after a record setting Sesquicentennial event in 2012. Richard Davies noted it was a great event.

Randy Roberson reported that progress is being made on the lodge renovation at Queen Wilhelmina State Park. He presented a PowerPoint with drywall paint, carpeted rooms and hallways, etc. showed the progress being made. Roberson noted there was a necessary change order to revise the layout of the kitchen. In response to estimated completion date, Greg Butts advised he anticipates having a substantial completion April 27 plus a maximum of 60 days for moving in and training purposes with a soft opening estimated for late June.

John Gill called a Parks Committee meeting February 19 in Hot Springs following the SPRTC meeting to discuss staff housing cost.

Adjournment

With no further business, the SPRTC was adjourned at 12:20 pm at the Hampton Garden Inn in Fayetteville, AR.