

**MISSISSIPPI RIVER PARKWAY COMMISSION QUARTERLY MEETING  
GRAND PRAIRIE CENTER  
STUTT GART, ARKANSAS  
MONDAY, FEB. 12, 2018**

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT**

Joe St. Columbia, chair  
Pat Audrisch  
Jim Craig  
Tyler Dunegan  
Anna Grizzle  
Bobby Kennedy  
Dr. Terri Austin McCullough

**COMMISSIONERS ABSENT**

Carole Bulloch  
Sarah Dunklin  
Kem Merrell

**TECHNICAL ADVISORS**

Kim Williams, director, Arkansas's Great River Road  
Dr. Ruth Hawkins, co-chair, MRPC Culture & Heritage Committee

**GUESTS**

Arkansas County Judge David Henry  
Paula Miles, assistant director, Arkansas Delta Byways  
Munie Jordan, executive director, King Biscuit Blues Festival  
Betty Kennedy, wife of Bobby Kennedy  
Mary Osteen, public information technician, Arkansas Department of Parks & Tourism

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Joe St. Columbia called the meeting to order at 10:32 a.m. on Monday, Feb. 12, 2018.

**WELCOME**

Jim Craig introduced Arkansas County Judge David Henry and the judge welcomed the group to Stuttgart and gave an update on the community.

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

**Terri Austin McCullough presented corrections to the minutes from the November 2017 meeting. McCullough moved to approve the minutes as amended. Pat Audrisch seconded. The motion carried.**

## **OLD BUSINESS**

The 2018 MRPC National Annual Meeting will take place Oct. 22-25, 2018 in West Memphis. The national board meeting will likely be held on Oct. 23. Mobile sessions are in the planning stages – ideas include stops at the Dyess Colony, the Sultana Disaster Museum and a possible social at Munnie Jordan's lake house on Horseshoe Lake. Lyn Pilch & Susanne Barnet are attending the Arkansas Governor's Conference on Tourism and we plan to discuss more with them there, as well as at the National Semi-Annual Meeting in Quincy, Illinois, this April.

Kim Williams has registered all commissioners for the Arkansas Governor's Conference on Tourism that have asked to attend. While the host hotel in West Memphis, the Comfort Inn & Suites, is booked, there is also an alternative option in Marion, the Hampton Inn & Suites – although they will not offer a state government rate during the conference.

The National Semi-Annual Meeting in Quincy, Illinois, will take place April 11-13, 2018. Mary Osteen is circulating the travel request forms through Central Office in preparation for this.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Osteen now has access to update the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism's Freedom of Information Act site – which includes adding the MRPC minutes. She will work to update this throughout 2018. Williams and Osteen will develop a public-use-only MRPC roster list to share on this site as well.

The Delta Byways Banquet will take place Feb. 23, 2018, at the Marianna Civic Center. Williams, Audrisch, St. Columbia and Grizzle plan to attend.

Craig has proposed that the Museum of the Grand Prairie in Stuttgart apply to become a Great River Road interpretive center. Dr. Ruth Hawkins gave some insight and suggestions on what is required of an interpretive center – including telling the story of the Mississippi River and how the river has shaped this area. Application forms are available online at [www.MRPCMembers.com](http://www.MRPCMembers.com) – these then go to St. Columbia (chair), who then sends it to the national office with a letter. The heritage committee reviews these submissions, and the national board has the final say. Williams plans to look into applying for the Sultana Disaster Museum as well. It was noted that the interpretive centers themselves pay for their signs, not the national office.

ASU Heritage Sites is helping to pay for two new Great River Road interpretive center signs. Hawkins reported there was some leftover grant money slated to be used to promote tourism in the region. One of the signs will be for the WWII Japanese American Internment Museum in McGehee.

2018 is the 80th anniversary of the Great River Road. Promotional items are coming soon from the national office.

September is National Drive the Great River Road month. Dr. Terri Austin McCullough recommends asking local lawmakers to issue proclamations to help recognize this event. A press release from Arkansas Tourism is planned for August.

## **UPCOMING MEETING DATES & LOCATIONS**

- May 14, 2018: Osceola
- Aug. 13, 2018: Helena
- Oct. 22, 2018: West Memphis (day before annual meeting)
- Future location possibilities: Arkansas Post, Dale Bumpers National Wildlife Refuge, Hampson Archeological Museum State Park, Mississippi County Museum, Little Rock.

## **MISSISSIPPI RIVER CONNECTIONS COLLABORATIVE**

McCullough shared that the 2018 theme for the MRCC will be "The Year of Arts, Music & Culture." The 2019 theme will be "The Year of the Great River Road." The meeting previously scheduled for this past winter in St. Louis, Missouri, has been rescheduled for August due to the federal government shutdown.

**Pat Audrisch moved to select Dr. Terri Austin McCullough to attend the MRCC meeting on Aug. 22, 2018. Jim Craig seconded. The motion carried.**

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

The 2018 King Biscuit Blues Festival will be dedicated to Mr. Sonny Payne and will take place Oct. 3-6. Jordan distributed save-the-date cards to all present and can send more as needed.

Little Rock Tours is offering a new trip to the Mississippi River.

Birding (specifically for the Smith's longspur) at the Stuttgart airport brings in around 1200 people annually (determined from a sign-in sheet at the airport).

The Johnny Cash Heritage Festival takes place Oct. 18-20, 2018.

The Mississippi River Country sales mission meeting takes place April 16-20, 2018, in Torrence, California, with the goal to market solely to the Japanese market. Invites are open to state CVBs and industry partners.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**Anna Grizzle moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:40 a.m. Tyler Dunegan seconded. The motion carried.**