

State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission
Delta Cultural Center, Miller Annex, 223 Cherry Street, Helena-West Helena
8:30 a.m., October 17, 2019

Commissioners Present

Jim Shamburger, Chair
Kalene Griffith, Vice Chair
Austin Albers
Bill Barnes
Jeff Baskin
Mike Gibson
John Gill

Eric Jackson
Weston Lewey
Montine McNulty
Cindy Smith
Mike Wilson
Randy Wolfenbarger

Absent

Ron Gossage
Shash Goyal

Bob Knight
Ness Sechrest

Department Staff Present

Stacy Hurst, Secretary, Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism
Jim Andrews, General Counsel Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism
Jim Dailey, Tourism Director
Grady Spann, Director, Arkansas State Parks
Kristine Puckett, Deputy Director, Tourism
Shea Lewis, Deputy Director, Arkansas State Parks
Theresa Helliwell, Agency Controller
Joy Barlogie, Tourism Development Manager
Elaine Lienhart, Executive Assistant, Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism
Marcel Hanzlik, Region 3 Supervisor
Jeff King, Project Manager
Kayla Hardage, Welcome Center Administrator

LaJeara Carroll, Executive Assistant, Parks Division
Tammy Boyce, Tourism Director Assistant
Molly Elders, Superintendent, Delta Heritage Trail State Park
Walt Reding, Superintendent, DeGray Lake Resort State Park
Kristina Root, Superintendent, Mississippi River State Park
Jeff Shell, Superintendent, Cane Creek State Park
Barbara King, Helena Welcome Center Assistant Manager
Kyle Miller, Director Delta Cultural Center
Dawna Parker, Helena Welcome Center Manager
Teresa Bailey-Jones, Helena Welcome Center

CJRW

Darin Gray
Chris Ho
Brian Kratkiewicz
Jennifer Morgan

Dalaney Thomas
Keegan Wright
Margaret Willis

Miles Media

Susie Kardas

Guests

Chris Fletcher, Governor's Office Liaison
Representative Chris Richey
Kevin Smith, Helena-West Helena Mayor
Clark Hall, Phillips County Judge

Chair Jim Shamburger called the meeting to order at 8:30 am. Elaine Lienhart called the roll.

Approval of Agenda

Austin Albers moved to approve the Agenda as presented. Weston Lewey seconded, and the motion carried.

Presentation of Minutes from Previous Meeting

One change was noted to the minutes, Commissioner Mike Wilson was absent.

Austin Albers moved to approve the Minutes from the September 25, 2019, meeting. Kalene Griffith seconded and the motion carried.

Welcome

Representative Chris Richey thanked the State Park, Recreation and Travel Commission (SPRTC) for visiting Helena-West Helena.

Mayor Kevin Smith welcomed SPRTC to Helena-West Helena. He thanked SPRTC and ADPHT for everything they do for the area with the Delta Heritage Trail State Park, Mississippi River State Park and the Helena-West Helena Welcome Center. Mayor Smith stressed the Mississippi River is a resource for the local economy and tourism in Arkansas.

Clark Hall, Phillips County Judge, stated Phillips County has recognized they have not committed their resources in the past for tourism; however, they are ready for that commitment now.

Robert Moore is working with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission to use Buck Island as a tourist attraction and an opportunity to attract tourism. The high road between Mississippi River State Park and Helena-West Helena has been paved to connect Storm Creek to Bear Creek; the final phase will require additional assistance to complete. Judge Hall's goal is to get the low road

accessible to bikers and hikers. The Helena-West Helena community understands the need to provide activities that enhance the quality of life to encourage the young people to stay.

Kyle Miller, the Director of the Delta Cultural Center, welcomed SPRTC to Helena and thanked them for including Battery C Park, Moore Hornor House, Fort Curtis, and Freedom Park on last night's tour. Dr. Miller invited the commissioners to visit the Delta Cultural Center exhibits.

Recognition of Guests

Jim Shamburger welcomed guests to the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission (SPRTC) meeting. Shamburger welcomed Commissioners and guests to Helena - West Helena and thanked Cathy Cunningham and the A&P Commission for the tour of the town, with Paula Oliver as a tour guide and the reception and dinner at the Pillow-Thompson House. He also thanked Kyle Miller and the Delta Cultural Center for providing the meeting space, and Main Street Helena for the breakfast and refreshments for the break during the commission meeting.

DIVISIONS OF PARKS AND TOURISM FINANCIAL REPORT

TBA

Randy Wolfinbarger moved to approve the Divisions of Parks and Tourism Financial Report as presented. Mike Wilson seconded, and the motion carried.

Secretary's Report

Secretary Stacy Hurst reported within the Office of the Secretary the transformation action team continues to look for opportunities for the divisions to share services. Hurst stated the team anticipates the first area to share services will be accounting and fiscal operations, including procurement.

Hurst commented Cynthia Dunlap, Chief Fiscal Officer, is leading the efforts toward a cost allocation system; this will be new for the department. Some of the other state agencies are already operating with a cost allocation system.

Secretary Hurst stated she is looking to fill some key positions. Jim Dailey will be retiring in December leaving the Director of Tourism position vacant. Other key positions to be filled are the Director of Heritage, Director of State Archives, and Chief of Communications for the Office of the Secretary.

Finally, the department is preparing for the April 2020 fiscal session for the legislature; the department budgets will be combined and presented.

PARKS

Parks Director Miscellaneous

FY19 ASP Park of the Year Awards

Grady Spann reported the Park of the Year (POY) selection process was revised this year. The parks excel at hospitality, taking care of facilities, customer comments, interpretive programming, working as a team and assisting other parks. The goal this year was to recognize the parks that went beyond what was expected and provided exceptional service.

Joe Kleine was chosen to speak to the park superintendents on his perspective of leadership change. Kleine's presentation emphasized embracing changes, the importance of leadership goals, and relaying the message on being a successful part of organizational changes. Discussion followed.

PARK OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNERS

FY19 Park of the Year, Region 1 Lake Dardanelle State Park

FY19 Park of the Year, Region 2 Davidsonville Historic State Park

FY19 Park of the Year, Region 3 Mississippi River State Park

FY19 Park of the Year, Region 4 Moro Bay State Park

FY19 Park of the Year, Region 5 DeGray Lake Resort State Park

FY19 Park of the Year Mississippi River State Park

Arkansas lawmakers discuss expanding ATV trails

Spann shared the article "Arkansas lawmakers discuss expanding All-Terrain Vehicles (ATV) trails" (Glisovic, KATV News, September 10, 2019). David Bell, ADPHT Chief of Policy and Legislative Affairs, testified during the hearing and Joe Jacobs, ASP Marketing and Revenue Manager, attended the hearing. Spann noted this is an important opportunity; however, state parks may not be the most appropriate location. ASP only controls 54,679 acres or 1.3% of the public land in the state while the US Army Corps of Engineers controls 500,000 acres or 11.9%, and the US Forest Service controls 3,536,538 acres or 84.5% of the public lands in the state. An important step would be to visit other states to see how they are managing ATV trails.

Discover how cotton was grown, harvested in the 19th century at the Plantation Agriculture Museum

Spann reported "Discover how cotton was grown, harvested in the 19th century at the Plantation Agriculture Museum" (Bledsoe & Lolley, THV 11 Discover Arkansas, September 11, 2019), highlighted the educational experience offered by a unique museum and state park. Spann reported this park has undergone major improvements in the past five years: constructed a new maintenance shop, constructed a tractor shed to protect the historic equipment, installed

a new modular home as a residence for park staff, and will be constructing a new restroom next to the tractor shed, that is also used to host events.

Other Days

Spann shared the article, "Other days 50 Years Ago" (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, September 12, 2019). The SPRTC considered a property owners request to build an open-air chapel in Mount Nebo State Park. The chapel was to be built on state park property; however, it would not be built at the expense of the state. Spann noted not all items approved by SPRTC are completed, and the chapel was never constructed.

Finding connections Governor: Park-goers say they want better internet

Spann reported "NWA Editorial: Finding connections Governor: Park-goers say they want better internet" (NWA Democrat-Gazette, September 13, 2019). The lack of Wi-Fi is a popular complaint from park visitors. Although visitors want to experience the parks, they still want to be connected to their wireless devices. For ASP the challenge is working with the Department of Information Systems (DIS) who is a significant part of the decision-making process for what types of information technology products and solutions can be provided in the parks. ASP is currently working to provide hot spots through Viasat at Village Creek State Park and Devil's Den State Park. A proposal for Queen Wilhelmina State Park and a review by the SPRTC is forthcoming.

Volunteers busy working to clean up Crowley's Ridge State Park

Spann mentioned the article "Volunteers busy working to clean up Crowley's Ridge State Park" (Reynolds, KAIT Region 8 News, September 14, 2019). Elizabeth Kimble, Park Interpreter, signs up volunteers to help clean up the park in conjunction with The Great American Cleanup. Spann mentioned he had recently received an email from Walnut Ridge Mayor Charles Snapp, praising Park Interpreter Elizabeth Kimble's interactions with the visitors to the park's booth at the Beetles at the Ridge Music Festival, held in Walnut Ridge. Interpreter Kimble provided programs to visitors at her booth. The sticker Mayor Snapp received after participating in the "Eat a Bug" program provided Mayor Snapp an opportunity to promote the parks.

Talkin' Country "the Rub" (Beginning – 1933)

Spann highlighted the recent AETN series "Talkin' Country 'the Rub'" (AETN, September 16, 2019), AETN's local follow-up program to Ken Burn's documentary "Country Music." Guests included Mark Jones, son of Grandpa and Ramona Jones of "Hee Haw," who works at the Ozark Folk Center," and Dave Smith, host of Ozark Highlands Radio. Many of the highlighted artists have performed at the Ozark Folk Center State Park Auditorium.

Town hall attendees support naming center after Dr. Hardison

Spann mentioned the recent article “Town hall attendees support naming center after Dr. Hardison” (Schol, Petit Jean County Headlight, September 18, 2019), was a chance to listen to local stakeholders' views regarding the naming of the new visitor center being constructed at Petit Jean State Park.

Oklahoman dead after fall from cliff

Spann reported on an article “Oklahoman dead after fall from cliff” (Kruse, Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, September 26, 2019). This incident occurred last month; the visitor fell off the cliff near the cabins near Petit Jean State Park and was recovered by park staff.

TOURISM

Director's Report

Jim Dailey reported on the different activities that Tourism is working on. Dailey and Leah DiPietro visited with Will Trice, Executive Director of the Arkansas Repertory Theatre, on ways the Division might partner with the organization. Dailey talked about the success of the King Biscuit Blues Festival that was held the week prior with approximately 20,000 people in attendance. Dailey spoke briefly about his trip to the Altus wine trail with Montine McNulty and staff. They met with Post, Mount Bethel, Chateaux Aux Arc and Wiederkehr Wine Cellars. There was discussion about getting the wineries together to go before the Arkansas Wine Council and propose using the grocery tax to open a visitor's center somewhere along the Wine Trail.

Dailey touched on his visit to Dogwood Hill Farms and meeting the social influencers “Idle Theory Bus” who are touring Arkansas. The Division has met with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission and Arkansas Economic Development Commission. There is a strong interest in ways the agencies can overlap and have some cost efficiencies in their marketing.

Dailey updated the Commission on what is happening with the Arkansas' South region. A meeting will take place in El Dorado in late October with city and county officials to help with the reorganization of the region.

Kristine Puckett gave a brief update on the next Governor's Conference and talked about the traveling photo exhibit that will start in Blytheville on November 5 and run through February 2020. It will then move to Fort Smith for The Governor's Conference on Tourism.

Sales

Jessica Ledbetter gave an update on her trip to the United Kingdom to meet with Peter Hannaford, Arkansas Representative for the U.K. and Ireland with Travel South. Ledbetter secured several tours that will travel through Arkansas along with partnering with a tradeshow in Dublin and with a travel website. Ledbetter left the meetings with each of the organizations excited about wanting to include Arkansas in their tours.

Ledbetter gave an update on the success of her trip to China. Several tours were secured while visiting and one of them has sold out twice. Ledbetter reported that British Airways is working to have a presence at the Clinton National Airport. Ledbetter explained that after a slow build, things are coming to fruition very quickly for us to have an international presence.

Tourism Miscellaneous

Joy Barlogie reported on working with the Arkansas Association of Convention and Visitors Bureaus group to identify research platforms that the state can invest in and make available to industry partners as a co-op offering.

Advertising – CJRW/Miles

Brian Kratkiewicz reported on the Spring/Summer 2020 media recommendations and broke it down by different media with an approved budget of \$4.8 million. The advertising dollars are being spent primarily on TV and digital. People are spending about 54% of their time using digital media and around 30% on television. That influences where the advertising dollars are being allocated. Kratkiewicz stated that radio and mobile advertising will be running heavy April through June. Print advertising will be used less to be able to fund the digital market.

Susie Kardas and Chris Ho gave an update on the website and social media traffic numbers. Kardas said there was a 15.8% increase in total traffic. Partner referrals are up by 4.8% and guides ordered are up 12.6%. There was a 1,567% increase in viewing guides online because there was a change in how to view them. Newsletter subscriptions decreased from last September to this September by 3.5%. Ho stated that a new button was added to Arkansas.com encouraging sign-ups and that saw a 167% increase on signups. Kardas said that the goals set were right on target.

MISCELLANEOUS

Jim Shamburger reminded the commission that November's meeting was moved to Mount Magazine State Park.

The meeting adjourned at 10:42.

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