

**State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission  
Via Zoom for Commissioners & Staff  
Via Conference Call for Public  
10 a.m., May 21, 2020**

**Commissioners Present**

Kalene Griffith, Chair  
Eric Jackson, Vice-Chair  
Austin Albers  
Blair Allen  
Jeff Baskin  
Bob Connell  
Mike Gibson  
John Gill

Ron Gossage  
Molly Houseworth Jackson  
Weston Lewey  
Montine McNulty  
Jim Shamburger  
Mike Wilson  
Randy Wolfinbarger

**Absent**

Shash Goyal  
Ness Sechrest

**Department Staff Present**

Stacy Hurst, Secretary Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism  
Jim Andrews, ADPHT General Counsel  
David Bell, ADPHT Chief of Policy and Legislative Affairs  
Cynthia Dunlap, ADPHT Chief Fiscal Officer  
Caleb Osborne, ADPHT Chief of Staff  
Elaine Lienhart, ADPHT Executive Assistant  
Travis Napper, Tourism Director  
Kristine Puckett, Deputy Tourism Director  
Tammy Boyce, Tourism Director Assistant, Tourism Division  
Theresa Helliwell, Agency Controller  
Jessica Ledbetter, Sales Manager  
Leah DiPietro, Communications Manager  
Bridget McLemore, Administrative Assistant  
Grady Spann, Director, Arkansas State Parks  
Shea Lewis, Deputy Director, Arkansas State Parks  
Jeff King, Project Manager, Parks Division  
LaJeara Carroll, Executive Assistant, Parks Division  
Randy Roberson, Manager of Planning and Development  
Darin Mitchell, Senior GIS Analyst  
Scott Waniewski, Park Superintendent Mount Nebo State Park

**CJRW**

Darin Gray  
Chris Ho  
Wade McCune  
Jennifer Morgan  
Dalaney Thomas

**Miles Media**

Keegan Wright  
Susi Kardas  
Ileana Franscone  
Daniel Czerwinski  
Ryan Thompson

## Guests

870-740-8255 – mobile phone Blytheville  
321-2277 – Visit Hot Springs  
501-517-1306 - Unknown  
908-1447 - Daniel Faulkner, Office of the Attorney General

Chair Kalene Griffith called the meeting to order at 10:08 am. Elaine Lienhart called the roll.

## Welcome

Kalene Griffith welcomed Commissioners and all participants to the Zoom/conference call of the State Parks Recreation and Travel Commission (SPRTC) meeting.

Griffith welcomed three new commissioners, Blair Allen, Bob Connell, and Molly Houseworth Jackson.

## Approval of Agenda

**Jim Shamburger moved to approve the Agenda as presented. Eric Jackson seconded, and the motion carried.**

## Presentation of Minutes from Previous Meeting

**Eric Jackson moved to approve the Minutes from the February 20, 2020, meeting. Weston Lewey seconded, and the motion carried.**

## Financial Report – April 30, 2020

Cynthia Dunlap presented the FY2020 Year-to-Date financial report for the tenth (10) month period ending April 30, 2020.

FY2020 Year-to-Date Revenues were:

- Parks Division Operating Revenue - \$18,091,236 a decrease of -7.75%\*\*
- War Memorial Operating Revenue - \$1,259,174 an increase of 3.86%
- 1/8% Tax Revenues - \$29,439,557 an increase of 2.88%
- 2% Gross Tax collections - \$15,095,960 an increase of 8.34%

FY2020 Year-to-Date Expenditures were:

- Department Total - \$95,443,135 a decrease of -2.08%
- Parks Division (including Construction and Grants) - \$75,115,293 a decrease of -2.20%
- Tourism Division - \$15,055,291 an increase 0.85%
- Keep Arkansas Beautiful - \$432,981 an increase of 12.58%
- Administration Division - \$2,851,013 a decrease of -11.57%
- War Memorial - \$1,988,557 a decrease of -6.36%

\* Please Note: percentages (%) are in comparison to the same period in the prior fiscal year.

\*\* Please note that the change in reservation systems from ASPIRA to MAESTRO has required a restatement of FY2019 operating revenue. Advanced deposits included in FY2019 operating revenue have been backed out for comparative purposes so that each year is reporting only earned revenue. Discussion ensued.

**Jim Shamburger moved to approve the Divisions of Parks and Tourism February, March, and April Financial Reports as presented. Randy Wolfinbarger seconded, and the motion carried.**

### Secretary's Report

Secretary Stacy Hurst reported Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism (ADPHT) has been all COVID-19 all the time since the Governor's Conference on Tourism. State governments are not good at reacting to changes, but Arkansas state agencies have been able to respond quickly. Many state employees are working remotely with some state parks staff still in the parks. New procedures have been put in place in a short amount of time. The Governor recognizes that Arkansas will have to live with the virus, but also must engage the economy. Arkansas Department of Health has been a great addition to the Governor's team.

Secretary Hurst stated travel and tourism have been the hardest hit sectors; Travis Napper is working with his staff making projections and planning. State parks were closed except for day use and are now opening slowly in phases. Secretary Hurst remarked she was very grateful to have a strong parks leadership team with Grady Spann and Shea Lewis and their staff.

Secretary Hurst reported state budgets have been impacted and there is a hiring freeze through the end of this fiscal year. ADPHT has halted discretionary spending and anticipates further budget reductions in fiscal year 2021. We are adjusting to a new budget as well as the private sector because the state has been impacted.

Secretary Hurst mentioned that because of COVID-19 she has not been able to get to the policy for naming of public buildings and hopes to have that for the June commission meeting. Discussion ensued.

### Parks Division

Grady Spann revealed the Arkansas State Parks re-engagement plan. The plan honors ideas from other state park systems. Arkansas and other state park systems have been meeting virtually and on phone conferences to share reopening strategies. Shea Lewis was able to weave the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines with Governor Hutchison's directive and Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) guidelines to establish cleaning protocols and practices for park facilities. Arkansas State Parks were never closed. What they discovered is that parks are an essential experience for the public. ASP is working with CJRW on a re-engagement advertisement; the message is not about COVID-19, rather a welcome to state

parks, “whether you have loved park for years or recently discovered us you are welcome, you belong here.” This is to welcome the new user groups that have discovered state parks. Discussion ensued.

### **2019 SPRTC Retreat Items Update**

Shea Lewis gave an update on the strategic plan as staff had started working on the continuity plan it was paused due to the current COVID-19 situation. ASP will have to reevaluate the goals and objectives with financial challenges and the ability to respond post COVID-19.

Lewis stated The Ozark Folk Center is being mindful of the current financial situation and making better decisions for the park as they open for the season. ASP has requested a proposal from Sound Diplomacy to provide a survey about The Ozark Folk Center and their relevancy in the community.

Lewis remarked the reservation system continues to work to provide updates including a new workaround solution by working with park staff and Miles Partnership for a “what is available this weekend” button, that should be available soon.

Lewis commented as ASP prepares for Crater of Diamonds State Park Diamond search area reopening, Joe Jacobs is working with Cynthia Dunlap’s team and CJRW to offer online ticket purchases through Ticket Leap.

### **Loco Ropes – Concession & Operating Agreement consideration of waiving fee at Ozark Folk Center State Park**

Grady Spann reported Loco Ropes concession operation that operates a high ropes course at Ozark Folk Center State Park, has requested ASP to waive the annual minimum of \$15,0000 annual fee due to COVID-19 causing a loss of revenue for the Concessionaire. Spann recommends we waive the \$15,000 annual fee and ASP would still collect the 10% of gross revenue (excluding Arkansas sales tax or use taxes) payment.

**Jim Shamburger moved to approve Arkansas State Parks to waive Loco Ropes \$15,000 annual fee for one year, the calendar year 2020 and Arkansas State Parks will collect the 10% of gross revenue payments (excluding Arkansas sales tax or use taxes) for 2020. Weston Lewey seconded, and the motion carried.**

### **Prairie Grove Battlefield Women’s Auxiliary – Concession & Operating Agreement at Prairie Grove Battlefield State Park**

Grady Spann reported that the Women’s Auxiliary Agreement will expire June 19, 2020, and is due for renewal. Originating in 1975, the agreement is unique to this park. ASP approves capital improvements and projects for the park provided by the Women’s Auxiliary funding. In addition, the Women’s Auxiliary secures antiques and Civil War items for the park. Spann requested renewal of the agreement.

**John Gill moved to approve the renewal of the Prairie Grove Battlefield State Parks Women’s Auxiliary with Arkansas State Parks for a five-year period. Bob Connell seconded, and the motion carried.**

**Recreational Trails Program (RTP) Resolution for FY20 Grant Applications**

Jeff King presented a Recreational Trails Program Resolution to the SPRTC seeking the support of ADPHT working in cooperation with Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDOT) for federal funds to build trail options. He stated ASP would like to apply for the Federal-Aid Recreational Trails Fund to develop or improve the Delta Heritage Trail State Park, Rail-to-Trail Corridor from Mellwood to Snow Lake, the Delta Heritage Trail State Park, Rail-to-Trail Corridor, Arkansas River “Yancopin” Bridge Retrofit, the Toltec Mounds Archeological State Park, Surface Improvements to the Plum Bayou Trail, Knapp Trail, and Boardwalk, and the Devil’s Den State Park Trail Improvements Phase II. The above projects are listed in order of priority. A maximum of 80% of the total project costs (up to \$500,000) may be funded from the ARDOT grant programs. A minimum 20% match must be provided by Arkansas State Parks via Amendment 75 funds or a grant from the Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council. The ARDOT grant funds would be provided as a reimbursement of project expenditures.

Arkansas State Parks is required to submit resolutions from the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission (SPRTC) expressing their support for the projects and providing assurance that funding will be available to support the projects. To meet the application deadlines, ASP requests approval of the resolutions from the SPRTC at the May 2020 meeting.

**John Gill moved to approve Recreational Trails Program Resolution, to express full support from the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission for the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism to submit a grant application seeking federal grants to build and to improve the Delta Heritage Trail State Park, Rail-to-Trail Corridor from Mellwood to Snow Lake, the Delta Heritage Trail State Park, Rail-to-Trail Corridor, Arkansas River “Yancopin” Bridge Retrofit, the Toltec Mounds Archeological State Park, Surface Improvements to the Plum Bayou Trail, Knapp Trail, and Boardwalk, and the Devil’s Den State Park Trail Improvements Phase II.**

**Mike Wilson seconded, and the motion carried.**

**RESOLUTION**

**WHEREAS, the Arkansas State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission and the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism, State Parks Division (Grantee) understand that Federal–Aid Recreational Trails Funds are available at eighty percent (80%) federal participation and twenty percent (20%) local match to develop or improve the Delta Heritage Trail State Park, Rail-to-Trail Corridor from Mellwood to Snow Lake, the Delta Heritage Trail State Park, Rail-to-Trail Corridor, Arkansas River “Yancopin” Bridge Retrofit, the Toltec**

**Mounds Archeological State Park, Surface Improvements to the Plum Bayou Trail, Knapp Trail, and Boardwalk, and the Devil’s Den State Park Trail Improvements Phase II; and**

**WHEREAS, the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism, State Parks Division, understands that Federal-Aid Funds are available for these projects on a reimbursable basis, requiring work to be accomplished and proof of payment prior to actual monetary reimbursement, and**

**WHEREAS, these projects, using federal funding, will be open and available for use by the general public and maintained by the applicant.**

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Arkansas State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission, that:**

**Section I: The Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism, State Parks Division, will participate in accordance with its designated responsibility, including maintenance of these projects.**

**Section II: The Secretary of the Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism or their designees are hereby authorized and directed to execute all appropriate agreements and contracts necessary to expedite the construction of the above stated projects.**

**Section III: The Arkansas State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission, pledges its full support and hereby authorizes the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism, State Parks Division, to cooperate with the Arkansas Department of Transportation to initiate action to implement these projects.**

**THIS RESOLUTION adopted by the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission on this 21st day of May 2020.**

**ARKANSAS STATE PARKS, RECRATION AND TRAVEL COMMISSION**

**/s/Kalene Griffith, Chair**

**ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, HERITAGE AND TOURISM**

**/s/Stacy Hurst, Cabinet Secretary**

**Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) Resolution for FY20 Grant Applications**

Jeff King reported the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) and Recreational Trails Program grants (RTP) are federally funded programs for the purpose of building and maintaining motorized, nonmotorized, and multiple-use trails. Local, county, state, and private/non-profit agencies are eligible to apply for funds, so long as access by the public is provided throughout the life of the project. The TAP and RTP programs are managed by the Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDOT) and are reimbursement-type grant programs, providing for an 80 percent federal share and a 20 percent local match, which is required from the eligible sponsor to develop or improve the Delta Heritage Trail State Park, Rail-to-Trail Corridor from Mellwood to Snow Lake, the Delta Heritage Trail State Park, Rail-to-Trail Corridor, Arkansas River

“Yancopin” Bridge Retrofit, the Toltec Mounds Archeological State Park, Surface Improvements to the Plum Bayou Trail, Knapp Trail, and Boardwalk, and the Devil’s Den State Park Trail Improvements Phase II. The ARDOT grant funds would be provided as a reimbursement of project expenditures.

Arkansas State Parks is required to submit resolutions from the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission (SPRTC) expressing their support for the projects and providing assurance that funding will be available to support the projects. To meet the application deadlines, ASP requests approval of the resolutions from the SPRTC at the May 2020 meeting.

**John Gill moved to approve Recreational Trails Program Resolution, to express full support from the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission for the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism to submit a grant application seeking federal grants to build and to improve the Delta Heritage Trail State Park, Rail-to-Trail Corridor from Mellwood to Snow Lake, the Delta Heritage Trail State Park, Rail-to-Trail Corridor, Arkansas River “Yancopin” Bridge Retrofit, the Toltec Mounds Archeological State Park, Surface Improvements to the Plum Bayou Trail, Knapp Trail, and Boardwalk, and the Devil’s Den State Park Trail Improvements Phase II.**

**Mike Wilson seconded, and the motion carried.**

## **RESOLUTION**

**WHEREAS, the Arkansas State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission and the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism, State Parks Division (Grantee) understand that Federal–Aid Transportation Alternatives Program Funds are available at eighty percent (80%) federal participation and twenty percent (20%) local match to develop or improve the Delta Heritage Trail State Park, Rail-to-Trail Corridor from Mellwood to Snow Lake, the Delta Heritage Trail State Park, Rail-to-Trail Corridor, Arkansas River “Yancopin” Bridge Retrofit, the Toltec Mounds Archeological State Park, Surface Improvements to the Plum Bayou Trail, Knapp Trail, and Boardwalk, and the Devil’s Den State Park Trail Improvements Phase II; and**

**WHEREAS, the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism, State Parks Division, understands that Federal-Aid Funds are available for these projects on a reimbursable basis, requiring work to be accomplished and proof of payment prior to actual monetary reimbursement; and**

**WHEREAS, these projects, using federal funding, will be open and available for use by the general public and maintained by the applicant.**

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Arkansas State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission, that:**

**Section I: The Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism, State Parks Division, will participate in accordance with its designated responsibility, including maintenance of these projects.**

**Section II: The Secretary of the Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism or their designees are hereby authorized and directed to execute all appropriate agreements and contracts necessary to expedite the construction of the above stated projects.**

**Section III: The Arkansas State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission, pledges its full support and hereby authorizes the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism, State Parks Division, to cooperate with the Arkansas Department of Transportation to initiate action to implement these projects.**

**THIS RESOLUTION adopted by the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission on this 21st day of May 2020.**

**ARKANSAS STATE PARKS, RECREATION AND TRAVEL COMMISSION**

**/s/Kalene Griffith, Chair**

**ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, HERITAGE AND TOURISM**

**/s/Stacy Hurst, Cabinet Secretary**

**Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) Resolution for FY20 Grant Award**

Jeff King presented the Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) was created to improve state and local transportation facilities that provide access to and through federal lands for visitors, recreationists and resource users; these projects, using federal funding, will be open and available for use by the general public and maintained by the applicant. King stated ASP would like to apply for the Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) for improvements to the Delta Heritage Trail State Park, Rail-to-Trail Corridor from Watson to the Arkansas River Bridge. Federal-Aid Funds are available for these projects on a reimbursable basis, requiring work to be accomplished and proof of payment prior to actual monetary reimbursement.

Arkansas State Parks is required to submit resolutions from the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission (SPRTC) expressing their support for the projects and providing assurance that funding will be available to support the projects. To meet the application deadlines, ASP requests approval of the resolutions from the SPRTC at the May 2020 meeting. Discussion ensued

**Eric Jackson moved to approve Federal Lands Access Program Resolution, to express full support from the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission for the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism to submit a grant application seeking federal grants to for improvements to the Delta Heritage Trail State Park, Rail-to-Trail Corridor from Watson to the Arkansas River Bridge.**

**John Gill seconded, and the motion carried.**

**RESOLUTION**

**WHEREAS, the Arkansas State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission and the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism, State Parks Division (Grantee) understands that Federal–Aid Funds shall be awarded through the Federal Lands Access Program for improvements to the Delta Heritage Trail State Park, Rail-to-Trail Corridor from Watson to the Arkansas River Bridge**

**WHEREAS, the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism, State Parks Division, understands that Federal–Aid Funds are available for these projects on a reimbursable basis, requiring work to be accomplished and proof of payment prior to actual monetary reimbursement, and**

**WHEREAS, The Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) was created to improve state and local transportation facilities that provide access to and through federal lands for visitors, recreationists and resource users; and these projects, using federal funding, will be open and available for use by the general public and maintained by the applicant.**

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Arkansas State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission, that:**

**Section I: The Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism, State Parks Division, will participate in accordance with its designated responsibility, including maintenance of these projects.**

**Section II: The Secretary of the Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism or their designees are hereby authorized and directed to execute all appropriate agreements and contracts necessary to expedite the construction of the above stated projects.**

**Section III: The Arkansas State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission, pledges its full support and hereby authorizes the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism, State Parks Division, to cooperate with the Federal Lands Access Program, administered by the Eastern Federal Lands Highway Division to initiate action to implement these projects.**

**THIS RESOLUTION adopted by the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission on this 21st day of May 2020.**

**ARKANSAS STATE PARKS, RECREATION AND TRAVEL COMMISSION**

**/s/Kalene Griffith, Chair**

**ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, HERITAGE AND TOURISM**

**/s/Stacy Hurst, Cabinet Secretary**

## CIP Quarterly Report

Jeff King reported at the end of April 2020, Arkansas State Parks maintains thirty-one (31) open Methods of Finance (MOF) for design, construction, and property acquisition efforts of the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) with approximately \$61 million of encumbered funds and an available balance of approximately \$20.9 million. The State Parks Division is currently funding or has previously committed funding of 205 projects of various size and scope within these open MOFs. In Fiscal Year 2020, thirteen (13) MOF's have been closed, totaling \$21,999,694.

As a response to the COVID-19 Health Emergency, it is important to note that most design projects have been put on hold for the remainder of FY20. Two construction contracts (Arkansas Post – Exterior Improvements to the Refeld-Hinman Log Cabin, \$104,000 and DeGray Lake Resort – Waterline Replacement, \$574,970) were canceled following bidding, and one bid opening was canceled (Crater of Diamonds – new restaurant, estimated cost of \$717,264). These projects remain postponed until funding priorities change.

The Planning and Development Section has also released \$623,000 in funding from open MOFs for department use in non-CIP budget areas. An additional \$5,800,000 in construction funding for the new Petit Jean Visitor Center has been recommitted from Park Division's FY19 and FY20 Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council (ANCR) grant funding in order to release funds from Amendment 75 revenues to utilize for department use in non-CIP budget areas.

Since passage of Amendment 75, Arkansas State Parks has utilized over \$183 million to complete system-wide improvements with our apportionment of the 1/8<sup>th</sup> Cent Conservation revenue. The attached ***A-75 Legislative Spending Report*** provides the details of completed and projects underway by park location and updated through March 2020. Discussion followed.

## Structure Removals

### Mississippi River State Park – Storm Creek Lake Campground Vault Toilet structure removal

Jeff King requests permission to remove a structure from Mississippi River State Park's inventory. The Vault Toilet Storm Creek Campground (Building 69.24) is a 66 square foot cinderblock structure with no HVAC or electricity. The structure was originally built by the US Forest Service to serve as the bathroom for the campground area. The age of the structure is unknown. The building has outlived its usefulness and will be rendered redundant by its replacement with a new bathhouse facility that will be built in FY20. The removal of the existing structure will be part of the general contractor's responsibilities.

**Jim Shamburger moved to approve based on the information presented; the commission finds the following structure at Mississippi River State Park the Vault Toilet Storm Creek Campground (Building 69.24) obsolete notwithstanding the insured value and approves the removal from Arkansas State Park inventory.**

**Weston Lewey seconded, and the motion carried.**

### **Devil's Den State Park – Paint Storage Building #16.63**

Jeff King requests permission to remove a structure from Devil's Den State Park's inventory. The Paint Storage (Building No. 16.63/AASIS No. 120005780) is a 144 square foot wooden structure with asphalt shingle roof and concrete floor built in 1980. It has been used for several years as a paint storage building. The building has outlived its usefulness and costs to repair exceed the value of the structure.

**Jim Shamburger moved to approve based on the information presented; the commission finds the following structure at Devil's Den State Parks Paint Storage (Building No. 16.63/AASIS No. 120005780) obsolete notwithstanding the insured value and approves the removal from Arkansas State Park inventory.**

**Weston Lewey seconded, and the motion carried.**

### **Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area – Gratto/Riggle Property**

Jeff King stated Arkansas State Parks has received a request from Matt Grotto and Brian Riggle for a Use Permit Agreement for use of an existing logging road to access a five (5.61) acre property they purchased from the Boone Family Trust and legally described as:

A part of the Northeast Quarter of the northeast quarter of Section 19, Township 19 North, Range 27 West in Benton County, Arkansas, being more particularly described as follows, to-wit: Commencing at the Southeast corner of said Northeast quarter of the Northeast quarter; thence N 02° 26' 42" E 165.42 feet to the point of beginning; thence N 61°32'45" W 364.96 feet; thence N 24°10'18"W 366.91 feet; thence N 02°24'40" E 165.09 feet; thence S 88°31'20" E 492.59 feet; thence S 02°26'54" W 561.48 feet to the point of beginning, containing 5.61 acres, more or less.

Use Permit Agreement to allow access to the above described property utilizing the old logging road but will not have direct access off Cobble Lane. There are no other routes to the private property except through state park property due to the topography of the land. It will be the responsibility of the landowners to obtain legal access off Cobble Lane to the existing logging road. Discussion ensued.

**Montine McNulty moved to approve a Use Permit Agreement to new property owners Matt Grotto and Brian Riggle at Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area as follows:**

***A part of the Northeast Quarter of the Northeast quarter of Section 19, Township 19 North, Range 27 West in Benton County, Arkansas, being more particularly described as follows, to-wit: Commencing at the Southeast corner of said Northeast quarter of the Northeast quarter; thence N 02° 26' 42" E 165.42 feet to the point of beginning; thence N 61°32'45" W 364.96 feet; thence N 24°10'18"W 366.91 feet; thence N 02°24'40" E 165.09 feet; thence S 88°31'20" E 492.59 feet; thence S 02°26'54" W 561.48 feet to the point of beginning, containing 5.61 acres, more or less.***

**Jeff Baskin seconded, and the motion carried.**

### **Petit Jean State Park - Use Permit Agreement**

Jeff King reported Arkansas State Parks has received a request from Michael and Betty VanBuskirk for a Use Permit Agreement for use of an existing gravel road running approximately 400 feet east from an intersection with West Road. The property that they are purchasing is legally described as: *Part of the SW ¼, NE ¼, Section 31, Township 6 North, Range 18 West, Conway County, AR containing 5.95 acres, more or less.*

A Use Permit Agreement to allow access to the above described property have been granted in the past to the previous property owner, Keith Price in 1998: *A Fifteen (15) foot strip of land, lying 7 feet 5 inches either side of a centerline and approximately 400 feet long right of way across a part of the SE ¼ NE ¼, Section 31, T6N, R18W.* Discussion ensued.

**Eric Jackson moved to approve a Use Permit Agreement to new property owners Michael and Betty VanBuskirk at Petit Jean State Park as follows:**

***A Fifteen (15) foot strip of land, lying 7 feet 5 inches either side of a centerline and approximately 400 feet long right of way across a part of the SE ¼ NE ¼, Section 31, T6N, R18W, Conway County, Arkansas.***

**Weston Lewey seconded, and the motion carried.**

### **MOU – Ozark Chinquapin Foundation and Arkansas State Parks**

Jeff King reported pursuant to Park Directive No. 1030 and authorized by Arkansas Code Annotated 19-11-1203, ASP asks that we bring the Memorandum of Understanding before the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission and seek approval to initiate this agreement with the Ozark Chinquapin Foundation. Discussion followed.

**John Gill moved to approve the Memorandum of Understanding between Ozark Chinquapin Foundation and Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism for an Ozark Chinquapin Restoration Project following review and language revisions by Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism’s General Counsel Jim Andrews**

**Bob Connell seconded, and the motion carried.**

### **Acceptance of Phase II Monument Trails at Mount Nebo State Park**

Jeff King presented through a Memorandum of Agreement with Arkansas State Parks, the Arkansas Parks & Recreation Foundation (APRF) will soon finalize substantial completion of the second phase of Monument Trails at Mount Nebo State Park (see attached letter from the APRF). The Phase II development includes approximately 17 miles (map attached) of additional trails at Mount Nebo, bringing the total distance for the Mount Nebo Monument Trails development to nearly 24 miles.

The previously mentioned Memorandum of Agreement calls for transfer of exclusive rights and ownership of the projects to Arkansas State Parks, upon completion of the development projects. In conjunction with A.C.A. § 22-4-103, I ask that the State Parks, Recreation, and Travel Commission, at its discretion, accept these contributions of the APRF used to improve the state park system. Discussion ensued.

**John Gill moved to formally accept the gift of the Arkansas Parks & Recreation Foundation improvements completed at Mount Nebo State Park.**

**Weston Lewey seconded, and the motion carried.**

## TOURISM DIVISION

### Director's Report

Kalene Griffith welcomed Travis Napper to his first commission meeting. Napper stated that he and the entire Tourism staff are working remotely. He is trying to meet with all staff virtually or in person and has met virtually with Regional Tourist Associations, the staff at CJRW, and key partners in the industry.

Welcome Centers will open when they receive the necessary personal protective equipment to be able to operate safely for staff and guests.

Napper reported that keeping industry partners informed is vital and is being done through the Industry Insider newsletter (currently bi-weekly) and a weekly call with the Arkansas Association of Convention and Visitors Bureaus.

Napper reported that staff have been given the opportunity to take free online training courses in hospitality and tourism. Miles and CJRW are assisting industry partners with "Google my Business" training. The recent newsletter promoted improvements to business listings on Arkansas.com.

During National Travel and Tourism week, Tourism participated in a virtual road trip, staff hosted a Zoom happy hour, and Arkansas.com had virtual content which included coloring sheets, crossword puzzles, and Zoom backgrounds, resulting in significant media interest.

Napper spoke about COVID recovery response and reported that two different surveys have been distributed, both with good responses. A small and diverse think tank group was created; partners talked about broad topics and specific tactics. CJRW took those ideas and came up with a preliminary plan on how to move forward.

Napper and Kristine Puckett have been working on the budget process with Cynthia Dunlap. Using reports and recommendations, the projected income was targeted to be approximately

\$10.5 million for the 2% tourism tax. Additionally, cuts to the current fiscal year budget are providing for a carryover of approximately \$5 million.

Napper reported that occupancy rates for traditional lodging around the state were down for the months of March and April.

### CJRW

Jennifer Morgan reported that consumer sentiment research is guiding the current marketing strategy. Campaign adjustments include a reduced fiscal year 2020 budget and a shift of advertising to fiscal year 2021. June 1 will begin the in-state media campaign with co-op opportunities for the industry which include cable television broadcasts along with rural and metro radio placements. Several industry partners opted to come in at a lower level with digital banner ad placement on Arkansas.com. On July 2, out-of-state messaging will resume, and a detailed budget and placement strategy will follow with the fiscal year 2021 proposal. Morgan reported that the remaining fiscal year 2020 budget was reduced by \$4.6 million.

Wade McCune reported on the recovery strategy and best practices to use moving forward. There is a need to generate travel, but the approach must be cautious and not create over-tourism issues. The plan is to encourage Arkansas residents to rediscover the state by showcasing a range of destinations and activities around the state that may not have been as heavily promoted in the past.

Additionally, there will be a revamp of the current “This is Arkansas” creative campaign, focusing on the outdoor activities where people are more comfortable going, given the ability to social distance much easier. Enticing itineraries will be promoted as well as mid-week travel to more popular destinations.

Kalene Griffith stated that according to TripAdvisor 86% of consumers said cleanliness is the most important thing being researched. One of the items at the top of every single travel sentiment is “how to make people feel safe and comfortable.” She suggested there needs to be something tied into the campaign to address that. Discussion ensued.

Susie Kardas reported on the website numbers for Arkansas.com, comparing January through April 2019 to 2020. Total users to the site saw a decrease of 12.9%. Partner referrals decreased by 29.5%. Guides ordered decreased by 30.1%, while guides viewed online were up by 152%. Newsletter subscriptions increased by .13%. Total traffic and conversion rates are down. Content update to the website includes a COVID-19 travel advisory, a virtual “Discover Arkansas,” Arkansas at-home activities, and 360-degree tours.

Kardas reported on how COVID-19 has affected who is viewing the site and from where. On average, 22% of traffic is in-state and that increased slightly to 25%. Views from people out of state were down slightly from 78% to 75%. Kardas gave a breakdown of the number of views to accommodations and restaurant pages. There was a strong increase during the first of the year. It is down from where it should be, but there is a slight increase happening as travel restrictions are lifted. Website traffic from organic searches has increased over the previous year. Discussion ensued.

### MISCELLANEOUS

Kalene Griffith stated that if we are going to promote tourism that we should consider hosting our next SPRTC meeting in person. A decision will be made on that for the June meeting.

**Eric Jackson moved to adjourn the meeting; Weston Lewey seconded; the motion carried.**

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