



Mississippi River Parkway Commission  
Board of Directors Meeting  
September 17 & 18, 2014  
Minutes (draft)

**Participants:**

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| Bob Miller - Pilot           | Karl Samp - Pilot Pro Tem (MN-MRPC proxy) |
| Terri McCullough - Secretary | Joe St. Columbia - (AR-MRPC)              |
| Craig Mitckes - (IL-MRPC)    | Diana Threadgill - (TN-MRPC)              |
| Faye Wilkinson - (MS-MRPC)   | Lee Hinson - (TN-MRPC)                    |
| John Goodmann - (IA-MRPC)    | Mark Kross - (MO-MRPC)                    |
| Sherry Quamme - (WI-MRPC)    | Carol Zoff - Transportation               |
| Greg Pruitt - (KY-MRPC)      | Ruth Hawkins - Culture and Heritage       |
|                              | Norma Pruitt - Marketing                  |
|                              | Susanne Barnet – National Office          |

Pilot Miller called the meeting to order at 4:11pm on September 17, 2014. A quorum was present.

- **Past Meeting Minutes from 7/18/14**

Motion to approve by AR and second by MS. Motion carried.

- **Financial Report from 8/31/14**

National Office presented the financial report as of 8/31/14. Motion to approve by IL and second by Secretary. Motion carried.

- **Tax Exempt Status**

The National office updated the Board that the most recent communication with the IRS proved successful and paperwork is in hand and ready for submission with investments.

Pilot noted that since WI is the only commission using the national federal tax ID, and that they would look into their own options.

- **Strategic Planning Session**

We would like to hold a strategic planning session with the Board the day prior to the start of the Semi-Annual Meeting in Minnesota. It will be three years since our last session and strategic plan. Board members should plan for a full day session the Wednesday prior to the Semi-Annual Meeting.

- **Other Business - MRC Update**

Lyn provided a quick overview of MRC activities, including the new app, JATA Show and media FAMs. The MDPC grant allows for development of an app that will be translated into Japanese and will feature stops along the Great River Road. JATA is a travel trade show in Tokyo. Many MRC states are attending, including LA, MO, MN, IL and MN. MRC is participating in conjunction with Brand USA. The fall media FAM is October 5-24 with a focus on culinary in the upper states of IL, IA, WI and MN. The spring FAM will focus on the southern states.

- **Other Business - Logo Apparel**

Craig Mitckes from IL initiated a conversation regarding branded apparel with a national vendor such as Landsend. Profit possibilities could be directed to the foundation. Mary Stahlhut from Iowa mentioned CafePress as an option Iowa researched.

- **National Geographic Geotourism Project**

Bob Miller participated in a two day consortium meeting in August. He asked the Board to consider a cash contribution of \$40,000. He stated that we are the key to the success of this project. He noted that no chain businesses would be allowed on the website. He spoke of the press conference we would attend on Friday morning. In January there would be three meetings of key people at three locations TBD along the river, funded by the project. These meetings are key for setting up the project and the maintenance. Each state will have sub-committees. It will be a two-year project. We are to use \$20/ hour for time plus IRS mileage rates. It is important to maintain records for volunteer work. This is the largest project National Geographic has ever done. Mississippi River Trails is the fiscal agent. Delta Regional Authority is contributing \$200,000. Charles McVane is contributing \$250,000. Other contributions include the Mississippi Rivers and Towns Initiative, select cities and CVBs along the River. Bob reminded the board that MRPC signed an MOA with MRT to look into the project. He said the core team will manage the project and agreed that the language in the contract should reflect that. Questions regarding ownership were raised by the board, including who owns what is submitted. There were questions of concern and ownership when National Geographic is no longer involved in the project. The board wanted to know if there are links to the web site on the NG homepage.

- The meeting recessed at 5:30pm and will reconvene at 7:00am on Friday.
- The meeting reconvened at 7:05am.  
There is a teleconference next week with the consortium to further discuss the project. The pilot stated that we have a moral decision. Others raised concern about language in the contract.
- Arkansas agreed we need to approve \$40,000 to have a voice in the action.
- Wisconsin questions costs of the smart phone app and printed map and noted that the contract doesn't include maintenance costs.
- Pilot states he doesn't think these costs are important at this point.
- Iowa asked how we were going to handle the long-term maintenance.
- Pilot said he couldn't answer that question right now.
- Motion was made that pending the signed MOU with the MRCC that the board review and approve the roles, transparency of the finances first. Motion made by MN and second by WI.
- TN - Same initiative was done in East TN/ Smokey Mts. 4-5 years ago and they now have serious problems with maintenance and keeping it going. She suggested a conference call with this group could help guide us to a smoother process.
- IA stated the importance of sustainability.
- MN stated that Jim Dion said no business will pay a dime to be on this site.
- KY appreciates the time and effort put into this but shared a number of concerns, stating that what we are talking about is a 90 degree turn from what we were originally talking about at the Semi-Annual in Illinois. MRT is going to have a developed website. Maybe \$40,000 benefits us but I know some states are short of volunteers and the national office can't even get information from interpretive centers to complete their projects. Long term maintenance issues are a question. Is MRT going to commit at their costs to keep the site going. There are hundreds of miles of Great River Road in some states and who will provide that information?
- Ruth Hawkins stated that she is a member of the MRT board and she has concerns about the contract. It was her understanding that MRT would serve as the fiscal agent and the collaborative would oversee the project not MRT.

- MN said Terry has financial interests in this and she's signing the contract.
- Pilot said Terry is being paid by Charles McVain. He indicated that Terry is on the MRT board but no longer the executive director.
- IA said he is not comfortable with this. Who is signing what and responsible on the front and back end?
- A state-by-state vote was taken for the motion.
- All states voted in favor of the motion.
- KY said from a legal standpoint, is there a document that formally incorporates the organization?
- Norma Pruitt commented that we could put \$40,000 and this energy into marketing our own website.
- IA asked what is the urgency? What are we getting for this and how will it be sustainable?
- Pilot said I can't give you all the answers but we're moving forward.
- MN said there is a state of confusion. If we do support it, it sends a message that we are in approval in general.
- Terri McCullough said we are right here. There's a mid-morning press conference, but we are charged with promoting tourism and the Mississippi River Valley. There is conflict of the contract and transparency but we want to be a valued partner and we want input.
- KY said he feels no obligation to give a dime to this. We are stewards of this funding and our back is not against the wall. We have scarce resources and many issues must get changed.
- WI asked where appendixes B, C, D are and what they refer to.
- TN reminded everyone that we are a brand too and we are proud of it. We got these speakers this week because of who we are. They need us for this project too. We are paying for a brand that we can't even connect to.
- Pilot asked that we email all concerns to the national office and that as many people as possible plan to attend the meeting in Alton on November 5-7.
- Further updates to the motion include that contingent upon the \$40,000 we receive the most recent documents and appendixes, with a detailed budget and proposed maintenance budget with requests for transparency.
- There was also a request that the national office seek approval from meeting speakers to make their presentation materials available online.
- Meeting adjourned at 7:55am.