



Mississippi River Parkway Commission
701 East Washington Avenue, Suite 202
Madison, WI 53703



**MRPC Annual Meeting
New Orleans, Louisiana
Culture & Heritage Committee
Wednesday, October 7, 2015 2-5 p.m.**

Present: Co-chair Ruth Hawkins, AR; Faye Wilkinson, MS; Pat Audirsch, AR; Edith Pheffer, IA; Nancy Salminen, MN; Dennis Donath, WI; Phyllis Stinson, AR; Frank Nickell, MO; Martin Graber, IA; Greg Pruitt, KY; Ann Ventress, MS; Terri Austin McCullough, AR. The committee was joined later by Jane Regan, IA. Edwin Lyon, Ph.D., an annual meeting speaker, also attended Culture and Heritage Committee.

At 2 pm, Ruth Hawkins, co-chair, welcomed those in attendance. Dr. Lyon detailed a 9-minute video documenting the Mississippi River almost 30 years earlier. The program speaker stated that the video could be uploaded to experiencemississippiriver.com or other electronic sites for MRPC use.

Dr. Hawkins reviewed importance of using the Interpretive Center (IC) Evaluation Form located at mrpcmembers.com to conduct at least one annual visit to each IC. General discussion by representatives of the seven states present yielded various findings:

Positive:

1. Majority of ICs visited presented adequate Great River Road (GRR) supplies and maps.
2. September Drive the GRR promo keychains, window clings and postcard entries were displayed at ICs
3. Increased visitor census at ICs linked to experiencemississippiriver.com. IA detailed visitor demographics and other specifics compiled by their state tourism personnel documenting the benefits of electronic media in strengthening regional travel. The tourism return on investment factors included: number of IC visitors, time on experiencemississippiriver.com website, "click through" time and rate as well as tourist downloads.

Negative:

1. IC staff had only the broadest understanding of GRR. Few details could be related to visitors
2. Some IC staff unaware of jump drive provided for further training.
3. Area ICs are not communicating. No IC support offered within a geographic area.



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4. A few do not (and cannot) display signage (i. e. the National Park sites).

Suggestions:

1. Allow more frequent updates to experiencemississippiriver.com promoting festivals and events several months before the actual date. (Motion by IA, 2nd by AR)
2. Provide ICs the September Drive the GRR promo kits no later than late July-early August
3. Provide additional powerpoint jump drives so commissioners may present ongoing IC training.
4. Back of the GRR sign could be used by individual states for further information.
5. Emphasize Return on Investment (ROI) to state tourism departments with specific details gathered from experiencemississippiriver.com as economic impact vital to river town economies.
6. Accept Dr. Lyon's offer of the available Mississippi River video for experiencemississippiriver.com posting and consider the development of a complimentary, current video.
7. As part of the visits to ICs, should assess whether ICs continue to meet criteria and should continue as official ICs.

Two new ICs were presented to the Culture and Heritage Committee. Frank Nickell of MO recommended the Sikeston Cultural Development Cooperation (aka Sikeston Depot Museum), 116 West Malone Ave, Sikeston 63801, telephone 573-481-9967, website sikestondepotmuseum.com and email depotmuseum@sbcglobal.net.

Dr. Nickell detailed the flood plain history and the educational programs provided by the well-funded museum personnel. On a motion by MO and a 2nd by AR, the committee voted to recommend IC standing.

Iowa's Edith Pheffer was joined by Jane Regan who provided electronic photos for the recommendation of a unique grist mill titled the Motor Mill Historic Site, 23003 Grain Road, Elkader 52043 (physical address) and Clayton County Conservation Board, 29862 Osborne Rd., Elkader 52043 (mailing address), site director Jenna Pollock, telephone

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563-245-1516, website motormill.org and email cccb@claytoncountytia.gov. The historic site was important to the agriculture industry on the Turkey River, allowing water access to the Mississippi, though the mill is some 17 miles removed from the GRR. On a motion by IA and a 2nd by MN, the committee voted to recommend IC standing. Concern was expressed, however, that efforts should be made to keep the site open on a more frequent basis and to have adequate signage directing people to the site and indicating operating hours.

Discussion determined that adequate signs and poles could be transferred between committee members to identify the two newly accepted ICs.

The 2015-2017 MRPC Strategic Plan was reviewed in detail for the development of the C & H committee's work plan. This Strategic Plan, accepted 10-6-2015 by the BOD, provided both topics and implementation time line. The Culture and Heritage Committee Work Plan is attached.

Other Motions and Recommendations:

1. Host city for each meeting should invite nearby Interpretive Centers (one or two) to send a representative for a 20-minute presentation—perhaps during lunch.
2. The new brochure in progress should be proofed by every DOT, as well as the chair or a designee in each state.
3. The experiencemississippiriver.com website should be available to members year-round for updating and adding events and activities.
4. A letter should be sent to all Interpretive Centers that have not been nominated for the NatGeo Tourism project to walk them through the steps of nominating. (Those that have already nominated their centers should receive a letter of thanks.)
5. The Mississippi River Parkway Commission should encourage the use of Our Mississippi, a Corps of Engineers publication, as a resource for use in the fifth and sixth grades.
6. The committee requests \$1,000 for use in carrying out recommendations, primarily for offsetting expenses of IC's in attending meetings.

Meeting adjourned at 5 pm

Terri Austin McCullough, Ph.D.