MRPC Culture & Heritage Committee

Thursday-Friday, April 23-24, 2015

St. Cloud, Minnesota

Convened at 4:10 p.m. Thursday, April 23, 2015

Present: Co-chair Ruth Hawkins, AR; Co-chair Sheronne Mulry, MN; Faye Wilkinson, MS; Joe St. Columbia, AR; Terri Austin McCullough, AR; Edith Pfeffer, IA; Nancy Salminen, MN; Scott Tunnicliff, IA.

The Committee spent the first half hour meeting with the consultants developing the Corridor Management Plan for Minnesota to provide input and feedback.

The second half hour was spent in joint session with the Marketing Committee to discuss the Power Point presentation that has been developed for Interpretive Centers as a training tool for front line staff. Pilot sessions in Arkansas have indicated that staff members often are not aware of what the Great River Road is or what their responsibilities are as Interpretive Centers. It pointed up the need for commissioners to visit Interpretive Centers more often. Ruth Hawkins, AR distributed flash drives containing the Power Point to each commissioner present in order that each state can conduct training sessions for its Interpretive Centers. Ample flash drives also were provided to leave one with each Interpretive Center so that new staff can be trained. This is a Power Point with a lot of good information about the Mississippi River Parkway Commission and the Great River Road that can be adapted by the Marketing Committee for other audiences if desired.

Meeting adjourned at 5:15 p.m. and Reconvened Friday, April 24 at 8 a.m.

Discussion reviewed the jump drives distributed by Ruth Hawkins, AR to be used for Interpretive Center front line personnel training by commissioners after adding specifics about the Interpretive Centers in their state. Suggestions from field testing included:

1. Appointment with IC personnel to train maximum number of employees, as well as Welcome Center personnel, Game Wardens, Park Rangers and seasonal hires.

2. Photograph documenting IC signage condition and version.

3. Signatures of the personnel organizing the meeting and the attendees on the IC Visitation Checklist archived at member website, mrpcmembers.com.

This topic concluded with a motion by Edith Pfeffer, IA, and second by Nancy Salminen, MN, "All Commissioners in each state should visit Interpretive Centers using the provided flash drives by 9/1/2015 and return Great River Road Network of Interpretive Centers Visit Checklists to MRPC National Office, Madison, WI." The motion passed unanimously.

Another motion by Edith Pfeffer, IA, and seconded by Terri McCullough, AR, detailed "The MRPC National Office, Madison, WI should compile insights and statistics available from the checklists and communicate this summary to the Culture & Heritage Committee.” The motion passed unanimously.

General discussion about the 10-state Great River Road map followed. Faye Wilkinson, MS detailed the need for these maps for local distribution. Joe St. Columbia, AR stated that map omissions and inaccuracies limited functionality. Motions by Terri McCullough and seconds by Joe St. Columbia addressed the proposed revised maps: "Request the publication date from the Marketing Committee." Further, recommend “specific review by state highway department personnel and other prior to publication of the Great River Road Travel Map-revised to assure NSB accuracy, Interpretive Center correct placement and MS River Bridge inclusion." Both unanimously passed.

Geotourism insights are listed at the National Geographic mississippiriver.natgeotourism.com website. Committee members resolved to encourage Interpretive Centers self-nominate. Co-chair Hawkins suggested that all IC nominations conclude with the statement, "This is an official Interpretive Center of the Great River Road National Scenic Byway." Motion by Edith Pfeffer, IA, and second by Terri McCullough, AR: "All Interpretive Centers are encouraged to immediately nominate themselves as a geotourism location, notify the C & H committee when the paperwork process is completed and when/if the IC is accepted by the National Geographic portal." The motion passed unanimously.

Terri McCullough questioned, "How can MRPC and this C & H Committee be relevant in the anticipated launch of Viking Cruises on the MS River." Joe St. Columbia provided Viking personnel insight:

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Ruth Hawkins volunteered to pen a letter to Viking personnel on behalf of the committee identifying the MRPC 11 themes along the MS River. Other information that might be beneficial to the cruise company included contact data for a knowledgeable local Commissioner and addresses of the nearby Interpretive Centers.

The proposed update to the Mississippi River Traveler Survey from 2002 was reviewed. Three clarifications where suggested. Terri McCullough gave the Traveler Survey recommendations to Susanne Thiede-Barnet of the Madison, WI office at the close of the C & H Committee meeting. Susanne identified herself as the compiler of the data for later MRPC review.

Meeting adjourned at 9:45 a.m.