

Mississippi River Parkway Commission

Board of Directors Meeting

Friday, December 9, 2022

In attendance: LA – Sharon, IA – Lisa, Transportation – Francis, Pilot – Norma, Pilot Emeritus – Anne, TN – Edmund, MN and Pilot Pro Tem and Culture and Heritage – John, ERA – Nani, MS and Treasurer – Derrick, AR and Culture and Heritage – Pat, WI – Sherri, IL – Craig, MO – Mark, Transportation – Lindsey, Secretary – Holly, National Office - Susanne

Meeting was called to order by the Pilot at 9:05 am on 12/9/22.

Pilot requested approval of minutes from 9/7/2022. Motion to approve was made by MO and second by MN. Minutes are approved.

The Treasurer presented the financial report from 11/30/2022. There has been some delay in dues checks from certain states and there is still \$57,500 owed from 2022, but this should be resolved soon. Treasurer went through each of the financial statements. Before the report was approved, the members discussed and agreed that separating the expense report from the financial report makes it easier to see all the expenses as it is listed out in detail. Treasurer motioned to approve the budget. LA seconded the motion and the report was approved.

Pilot moved on to the new business section of the agenda and presented the new sponsorship proposal “The Friends of The Great River Road.” This proposal would affect MRPC’s 2023 budget, so it is important to start the discussion on the program. The goals of this proposal are to encourage participation, encourage additional revenue, and increase awareness. The pilot presented the \$100 annual and \$500 membership for individuals under this program, but there will be expenses associated with growing members and having an additional membership category. There is also revenue to be made from reaching out to companies and businesses along the GRR with sponsorship offers in exchange for promotion (detail listed in proposal).

Pilot opened the floor for questions. LA commented how the cost of this program may be too high for many rural communities along the GRR. The pilot explained the program isn’t necessarily meant to be a community sponsorship, but more for sponsors who are financially more available. There would be other types of membership for non-profit and individuals down the road, but the focus should be on getting the friend membership established for the revenue earning. LA asked whether or not it can be done simultaneously. Pilot answered that there are still some details to be worked out, but there shouldn’t be much problem if the focus is just on the friend membership category. Susanne/ National Office added that opening up different types of membership would require additional resources such as software support, so it is probably better to focus on one first. This is up for discussion for members and MRPC can do additional categories if the members desire. The promotion of the program would only be through existing channels, so there shouldn’t be additional cost associated with communication.

MN agrees that membership and sponsorship category should be separated but asked how many members we need to make it worthwhile for a membership program. Pilot directed the members to the budget sheet to answer that question. MN wants to know how much time it takes to manage the membership program, but P+B doesn’t know yet. Susanne/ National Office explained that we can only look to start for now and evaluate as the program goes. Pilot stressed again how this proposal can increase revenue for MRPC and engage with people who

want to contribute but haven't. MO raised the concern about how the previous effort in the endowment program failed and stressed the importance of extra communication to make it more successful than the previous one.

WI asked if the "friends" will be a group, 501(c)(3) separate from MRPC, or in other kinds of structure. Pilot answered it would be better if this was under our family of commissions, so we can maximize profit and cut costs in marketing and communication. LA agrees that MRPC can't afford another 501(c)(3) and added that from previous discussions with the marketing team, they have determined that MRPC can't grow unless we open up sponsorship to more people, tourist commissions, companies along the Great River Road.

LA commented that these memberships should be called "ambassadors" instead of "friends" and MO and WI agreed in favor of this. WI stressed that we need a more concrete proposal for each state board and MO agreed.

Pilot directed the members to move to the 2023 budget sheet, which should have answers for other questions. The budget sheet is based on the conversation with different offices and includes line item 54 as write offs for members who have difficulties in paying. LA asked if MRPC should keep the status quo or expand the awareness of GRR. LA proposed MRPC to be at more trade shows to grow awareness. LA explained that the past trade shows in Japan and Singapore representing MRC have given them insight on the market demands in India and Japan and the sponsorship could only be effective if MRPC can reach these market needs. Pilot answered that the friend membership proposal has taken that into consideration in the budget sheet and added additional budget for trade shows in 2023 using the projected additional revenue from the proposed memberships.

Pilot opened the floor for questions again and IA asked if these were realistic numbers. Pilot answered that it is expected for the budget to work accordingly, and this proposal is also for adding additional revenue to handle other challenges MRPC might have in budgets but will need more time to see. Treasurer then added that the deficit number should be according to the budget he presented earlier. Treasurer mentioned one of the possibilities to cut costs is to cut some spending on conference/meeting items. Pilot Emeritus added that, as a volunteer organization, it is hard to ask for more effort for people who are responsible, so maybe the goal number can go up slowly from \$10k then \$12K.

Pilot discussed whether or not we can afford two meetings a year. Pilot proposed a spring Zoom meeting then a fall in-person meeting. MN made a motion to have a zoom meeting (Spring) before in-person meeting (Fall potentially). MO second. Motion is approved.

Pilot brought the conversation back to the proposal. Pilot asked if members would consider the motion to move forward with this ambassador, friends' membership category. MN asked to clarify who this program would apply to. Pilot answered that the program is aimed to target individuals that may or may not be part of other committees or communities that can help raise awareness but are not targeting those committees or communities directly. MO commented that it might be too early to move forward with this proposal and wants to focus on sponsorship and advertising instead of individuals. IA agreed with MO and thinks members should reach out to some people and see if they are interested in this program first before this move forward. LA disagreed by saying tabling this discussion will stop the conversation for months. MN added that the members pushed forward with agreeing to put in effort to actively talk about this membership proposal on social media. The Pilot reiterated the possible revenue and

connectivity opportunity that this proposal can bring about. MO would like time to consider the proposal and work on a proper welcoming package for people who are interested in the program. LA pushed to get started on the proposal. Susanne/ National Office added that this would be a great opportunity for members in current channels to participate right away, and doesn't need to reach out to more people for us just to start. IA also added that each member can start by getting 10 friends/ambassadors to participate. LA motioned to approve the membership proposal and MO seconded. The motion is approved.

IA motioned to have all states to bring 10 ambassadors, if possible, to participate. LA seconded. MN added a question before the approval about the strategy to get 100 people total onto the program. LA answered that this effort to bring in initial participants will be a trial but members should start on this regardless. IA asked if we have concrete items to give out to people and Susanne/National Office proposed postcards. Motion is approved.

Before the meeting adjourned, LA brought up the news about the new highway grant in February of 2023 for LA. They are also expecting to add electric chargers for EVs along the GRR if the grant is approved. National Office will share updates with members once LA has them.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:04am.