

## MRPC Culture & Heritage Committee Meeting

January 17, 2023

### Attendees:

Pat Audirsch	Arkansas
John Anfinson	Minnesota
Mark Kross	Missouri
Ann Geiger	Iowa
James Janett	Iowa
Martin Graber	Iowa
Anne Lewis	Minnesota
Chris Miller	Minnesota
Adams Long	Arkansas
Joe St. Columbia	Arkansas
Frankie Pierson	Wisconsin
James Lundgren	Missouri

### Interpretive Center Model Nomination

John Anfinson has reviewed available approved IC nominations and has not found any that meet criteria to be a model nomination. He asked what members thought about using the National Register of Historic Places process as an example.

John looked at several National Register nominations and shared them ahead of time. He thinks these could offer a model for the level of narrative documentation we could require. He mentioned three others: one each from Natchez, Clarksdale and Vicksburg, representing very different sites. Many National Register nominations come from small sites and organizations, and yet they manage to put solid nominations forward. He suggested each state to find a National Register nomination from within the state and share it with those interested in submitting an MRPC IC nomination.

- Ann Geiger noted that the National Register form asks who is responsible for the site (overall governance) and recommended that we include this on the IC nomination form.
- Mark Kross talked about the process that National Register nominations typically go through – there is often review, feedback and assistance provided by other entities. Could the Culture & Heritage Committee take on this role?
  - John believes the committee does this already but not early enough in the review process. The committee should see an early draft so they can comment on it, with suggestion for improvements.
- Anne Lewis felt that state commissions play a role here. State commission members need information on the criteria and themes so they can effectively play that role.
  - Norma Pruitt asked about the process and involvement of state commissions, and if the state commissions receive feedback from the Culture & Heritage Committee after nominations are reviewed.
    - John adds that the state commissions usually submit and recommend the nominations. They sponsor them at the fall annual meeting.
  - A letter of endorsement from the state commission is currently encouraged. Ann Geiger recommended changing that to required.
    - John adds that even if required, we still need the nominated IC to complete an adequate nomination and the state commission to review it critically.
  - Others noted better training of state commissions is needed to support this. Mark Kross asked what the process would be if there is not an active state commission at the time. In that case nominations would likely go straight to Culture & Heritage Chairs for feedback and other letters could be included to show community support.

John asked if there are any states with pending nominations. Pat Audirsch responded that the Cold War Museum in Arkansas would like to submit a nomination, but she has asked them to hold while this committee discusses the process. Ann Geiger responded that a hatchery in Iowa would like to apply.

- Pat and John discussed asking the National Cold War Center to submit their nomination to use as a test case. The committee agreed.
- Norma suggested requiring a letter from the state commission (if active) and also a letter from a local government official – to demonstrate connection to the community.
  - John adds that we've received letters of support with most nominations, but the those who send it seem unaware of the nomination criteria. They support the idea without the substance.
- Ann suggested listing examples of possible letters of support providers.

Overall, could the form be revised to include: endorsement letter required from state commission (if an active state commission exists); a letter from a local government official; a list of suggested letters that could be attached if a state commission does not exist; chart showing interpretive themes with a checkbox for each and brief description of expectation; and identified site governance (state agency, independent non-profit, education institution, etc.).

Frankie Pierson asked about how to access the original nomination form for an IC as well as completed checklists. There is a new director at one of her ICs and the information would be very helpful before meeting with the site. John mentioned that blank checklists are available on the committee's webpage along with recently completed checklists that have been submitted. There was discussion on who has/how to access past nominations. Pat will check on this. John welcomed the new site director to attend a future Culture & Heritage Meeting if it would be of help.

Recommended actions:

- Include the responsible organization - state, city, private entity, other – in the application.
- Have applicants discuss their proposal with the C&H Committee ahead of time so they understand what is required.
- Require nominees to submit an early draft for the C& H Committee to review and to work with the committee to improve the nomination.
- Provide education for state commissioners on the nomination requirements before they submit a letter of support. A letter of support from the state commission is already emphasized, but we need to know the state commissions fully understand and support the required level of documentation.
- Require or encourage letters from local government unit and others key partners. This would require that those entities understand the nomination guidance.

### **Interpretive Center Checklists**

Interpretive Center checklists are to be done annually but few states are complying. The forms used to be more focused on checking up on the site. Now also ask what the MRPC can do for them. The goal is to build a better relationship. John opened the discussion and asked the group to consider whether sites should be removed from the network if they don't respond after a period of time, such as three or five years.

- Ann said Iowa had given notice to a site that they would be removed from the network if they didn't respond. The site in question is now more responsive.
- Mark suggested that state commissions consider holding meetings at ICs, as Missouri did at one time.
- James asked what the downside would be. Could we lose sites, and is this a bad thing? It might be better to have fewer sites with better relationships and interest. This is a two-way street.
- Pat felt that three years is a reasonable timeframe. Anne noted that Zoom has helped facilitate contacts if travel is an issue. She agreed on reaffirming every three years by doing the checklist.
- James asked about the need to look at all centers and identify any that do not meet the criteria.
- It is to the ICs benefit to complete the checklist. It is not helpful to circulate old information when we're publishing it on maps, websites, etc.
- State commissions have a role, but this responsibility lies with the ICs.
- Frankie strongly backed confirming the information and requiring checklists on a certain timeframe. She has run into this issue elsewhere during her career and believes clear consequences are needed.

- If this committee recommends removing ICs if no response in three years, does it require board action before coming final? Anne will check.
- **A motion was made, and the committee voted unanimously in favor. The expectation is that Interpretive Center checklists are to be completed and submitted annually, with removal from the network if no response is received for three consecutive years.**
- Pat noted that the three-year recommendation does potentially put pressure on state commissions, which could help.
- Ann suggested doing nomination form revisions, adding the three-year response/removal language to the checklist, and then presenting all to the Board as one package related to Interpretive Center processes. Anne agreed that this would be a good approach especially since all ten states are not represented at today's meeting. The package will be developed for review by the Culture & Heritage Committee before going to the board.

Recommendations:

- Add strong, clear wording about completing checklists, including three-year requirement. Let states know they will be removed as GRR ICs if they don't comply.
- MRPC will need to send a notice out each year well ahead of the September 1 due date.
- MRPC will also need to work more proactively with ICs to make clear the value we bring to them.
- State commissions need to play a more active role in making sure their ICs complete their checklists.