



MRPC Board of Directors Meeting

MINUTES of March 14, 2025

Attendance:

- Norma Pruitt - Pilot, KY
- John Anfinson - Pilot Pro Tem, Culture and Heritage, MN
- Holly Cain - Secretary, IL
- Derrick Biglane - Treasurer, MS
- Anne Lewis - Pilot Emeritus, MN
- Sharon Calcote - LA, Marketing
- Ann Geiger - IA
- Edmond McDavis - TN
- Sherry Quamme - WI
- Mark Kross - MO
- Francis Schelfhout - Transportation
- Chris Miller - MN (guest)
- Susanne Thiede-Barnet - National Office

The Pilot called the meeting to order at 9:01am.

A moment of silence was observed in honor of the late Martin Graber, chair of Iowa MRPC, in recognition of his leadership and service to the Great River Road.

Iowa proxy, Ann Geiger, shared that the Iowa commission is still processing Martin's death. He passed the night before their state commission meeting. He was not in pain, but passed quickly.

The Pilot asked if all reviewed the minutes of December 14, 2024. LA made a motion for approval of the minutes. MN seconded. Motion approved.

The treasurer reviewed the financial statements through February, 2025 and made a motion to approve. Second by WI, who commented her appreciation for the detail and format of the report. Motion approved.

Culture and Heritage chair and national office spoke of the upcoming spring virtual meetings planned for mid-May and encouraged everyone to invite their interpretive centers, as well as their commissioners and CVB/ tourism people. The national office will send emails, mail a post card and make follow up telephone calls to encourage attendance. Discussion will include

marketing efforts present and future, such as America 250, along with discussion about relevance within your community and region.

The Louisiana chair and national office provided a quick overview to the fall Annual Meeting in Baton Rouge, September 10-12, which will include great food and a talk with the author of *Empire of Commerce*, a good lead into discussion of America250. The pilot encouraged everyone to invite people to participate. Discussion continued about including partners in the agenda, such as the watershed initiative and the ports initiative so we can learn what they're doing. Wisconsin chair indicated that the ports and tourism are a current topic in Wisconsin. She also mentioned the MRCTI meeting in Minnesota, September 16-18. John Anfinson and Anne Lewis from Minnesota plan to attend. John added that ONEMississippi is trying to launch their first Mississippi River Day on June 2 and we will share in that promotion.

The Marketing chair asked what opinion states had about a pay-to-play for future consumer trade show attendance, such as AARP. Holly Cain from IL shared her approval of the idea. The chair continued that the national office would attend but states could also pay to attend. There would be a cost to participate and a cost to just send materials for distribution. Cost would be divided by participation. National office reminded everyone to encourage event organizers along the Great River Road to enter their events into our online calendar for promotion.

The Transportation chair shared that the committee continues to collect information on interpretive center wayfinding signage as included in the CMP for setting signage standards. Four states are complete. We're hoping to be done in early summer. Additionally we ordered the history of usage for MRT with our attorney and nothing appeared, as we expected. The expirations are up next week so we'll work on the next piece with pictures of how to use it.

ERA will continue to promote national pollinator week along the Great River Road in June. There was discussion about a new pesticide that impacting Monarchs and Trout fishing. Anne Lewis shared that Mike McClanhan from TN nominated MRPC for a partnership award through NSBF for our work on pollinators.

The National Office reminded everyone to look for information on the May spring virtual meetings. She shared information on the *USA Today* top 10 scenic byways recognition, which is embargoed until April 7 at which time voting begins for nearly a month. The national office has several promotion activities scheduled to spread word to the tourism database as well as the membership so we can take full advantage of this opportunity and look to be named the best scenic drive in America.

In other business, WI Chair gave a shout out to KY and Angie Wu, who we met when KY hosted their last national meeting. Angie's business was featured in *Big River Magazine*. John Anfinson shared that WC Handy, Father of the Blues, a key figure of the Mississippi River, will be inducted into the National Rivers Hall of Fame.

Meeting adjourned at 10:14am.