



Iowa Mississippi River Parkway
Commission Meeting Minutes
Monday, May 15, 2017
Eco Tourism Center
Camanche, Ia

Iowa MPRC Meeting May 15, 2017, Eco Tourism Center, 3942 291st St, Camanche, IA

Meeting called to order at 10:10 AM Attending were Chairwoman, Edith Pfeffer – Clinton Co, Randy Schultz, DNR; Jenna Beary, IA Tourism Office; Shawna Lowde, Iowa Tourism Office; Jenna Pollock, Clayton Co; Jay Schweitzer, Louisa Co; Martin Graber, Lee Co; Mary Stahlhut, IA DOT; Jean Peiton, Fort Madison CVB; and Jane Regan, Allamakee Co.

Regan read the minutes of the April 21, meeting in Paducah. Minutes were approved with corrections to be made by Regan. Moved by Schweitzer/ Pollock second. Motion carried.

Walt Wickham, Director of the Eco Tourism Center welcomed the Commission and reported they had 150 4th grade students from Eagle Heights Elementary in Clinton today doing Blue Heron rides, voyager canoes, and other activities. They just finished the work on the Nature Gallery this past winter and it looks wonderful. Artist Susan Holgersson from Rock Island, IL did the painting of the murals on the walls. The small classroom has a temporary display on loan from the National River Museum in Dubuque. High waters have not deterred visitors from coming. Half of the Campground is open due to the rest being under water at this time. Fishing tournaments will be starting soon. Walt stated the voyager canoe are very popular with the kids that come and they are looking at purchasing more and sharing with other County Conservation Boards up and down the River.

The budget was discussed: Pfeffer reported the Iowa Legislature approved our \$40,000 funding for FY18. An outstanding bill for the 2017 Iowa Byways Foundation was noted. Regan reported that at the National MPRC meeting in Paducah, KY in April, the National Marketing Committee and the National MRPC Board recommended that all States belong to the National Scenic Byways organization. After discussion on this recommendation to join the NSB organization, Schweitzer moved/Graber second to participate in this organization. Motion carried. Dues of \$125 should be paid immediately.

Discussed future meeting dates of June 19 possible conference call, and July 17, and Aug 21. Meeting sites to be determined to finalize plans for the National MRPC meeting in September 19-21st in Marquette, IA.

Planning for National MRPC meeting in Marquette, IA September 19-21 followed. Reviewed the draft agenda provided by the National Office and discussed actions that Commissioners need to complete before the next meeting. **Actions Include:** Confirm the caterers for meals, confirm the transportation for tours, confirm menu with the Empty Nest Winery. (Table decorations at the winery). At the July meeting, we will plan the Iowa opening reception on Tuesday evening, September 21. Regan will provide a list of speakers and their biography for the Interpretive Center workshops being planned for the Directors/Board Members and their staff of the Centers. Those I-Center attendees will join our Wednesday afternoon tour and evening dinner at the Winery. Graber and Schweitzer are working on Welcome Bags for the attendees of the meeting.

MRPC Committee Reports: **Culture and Heritage** – Martin reported that all I-Centers will be encouraged to attend the National MRPC meeting in September and we welcome their participation in the opening reception in Lansing on September 19 and workshops on September 20th. He reported on the Culture & Heritage meeting in Paducah. They are working on re-evaluating the application for Interpretive Center themes, and removing the obligation that the I-

Center sell GRR maps. Graber also **reminded each State Commissioner to complete their visits to the I-Centers** and the GRR Network of Interpretive Centers Visit Checklist. This form is located on the National MRPC Members website under Culture and Heritage Committee. The surveys must be completed with I-Center staff and submitted to Graber and Pfeffer by July 1. He suggested we also discuss the passport idea with our I-Center staff during our visits. Make note on the survey if they are supportive of this idea and would participate.

Transportation - Pfeffer reported that Diana Threadgill, National MRPC Representative to the President's Committee on the Infrastructure bill, chaired by the Las Vegas CVB Director and a MN DOT representative reported on this Committee's responsibilities. Pfeffer shared documents, provided by Carol Zoff of MN, showing the type of projects that could be submitted for consideration and their requirements. Pfeffer shared the type of projects that could be submitted for consideration in Iowa. The two projects for Iowa that are now submitted are the GRR at Montrose washed away by flood waters and the GRR Bridge at Crapo Park in Burlington.

Environmental, Recreation and Agri – Schweitzer reported that NO continues to want names of Agri-Tourism venues along the GRR for the national website. Continue to submit your recommendations to the NO.

Marketing Report – Regan talked about the **Snapchat project** along the Great River Road that National will be doing this fall. We are to find a site that is open on Sundays with a scenic view of the GRR and nominate it to NO for inclusion in the project.

The new reprint of the GRR maps will be out by Memorial Day. Each State is to advise NO where we want the maps sent to.

The new I-Phone and Adroid app designed for the Great River Road will be tested before Memorial Day by volunteers in each State and should be live by Memorial Day for travelers to enjoy using.

A Review of the Facebook and Iowa GRR website was provided from the Iowa Tourism office on how well our social media and website are doing and increasing every month with visitors and also the length of time visitors spend on the GRR website was noted is greater than any average user spends on other websites with less tendency to move to other sites. Our I-Centers are commenting more frequently how their visitor count is up and they truly feel it is due to our advertising efforts done on radio to direct people to the GRR website and our I-Center promotions.

The NO is working on a 10 State publication in MidWest Living for 2018 and each State will be featured.

Efforts continue in finding Corporate Stakeholders that will fund more projects, activities and marketing of the GRR with the National Marketing Committee. Corporate sponsor and Stakeholder names were mentioned that we will be contacting in the near future.

Regan addressed DNR technical advisor Schultz, advising that NE Iowa RC&D received grant funds from the Allamakee County Community Foundation for design and print of Upper Iowa River Trail maps. She reminded the DNR that we can have beautiful maps to depict the water trails but we also need safe access to the rivers. There is an extreme need for access to the Upper Iowa River and other heavily used tributaries to the Mississippi River that are used for recreation by those wanting to kayak/canoe and fish. There are limited areas currently available due to recent years of flooding that has made for extreme unsafe and destroyed access for parking and boat landings that deter visitors from getting onto and off the rivers. Schultz offered to look into this further and collaborate between County Conservation and private landowners and the State to review current access points and ways to improve upon river access.

FY18 Co-Op Advertising Program was presented by Jenna Beary, Iowa Department of Tourism. Last year Iowa MRPC participated in MW Living, a ½ page ad in the Iowa Travel Guide, Outdoor Iowa and the Eastern Iowa Tourism Guide. We currently have not committed to the Iowa Travel Guide for FY18 because the Iowa Tourism office does not have a FY18 budget in place due to State Budget restraints. Those opportunities for the Travel Guide will come in the next few weeks.

We have two opportunities done in house by Iowa Tourism Office: Travel Iowa.com opportunities are all done in house. 1. Print opportunities include anything in newspaper or magazine and 2. digital opportunities are available. We discussed the target market of demographics we want to reach. Are we trying to drive traffic to our website or the road? Most of Travel Iowa is Regional driven and does not include Chicago. Travel Iowa does not target Chicago except on billboards. Print opportunities generate leads, where the magazine has reader service cards that travelers fill out and can express interest in your location. Many partners find a

lot of value in the print generated service. The Iowa Outdoor package includes Iowa Outdoors and Iowa Sportsman for \$300.

Motion by Graber/Second by Schweitzer to reserve the following digital ads through the Iowa Tourism Office; Expedia-DMO program for \$500, Meredith Digital Network \$2,000, TripAdvisor \$2000. Motion Carried. Shawn Lode said they would hold these ads for us so that we do not have to go online on Jun 6th to reserve them.

Our Facebook is not managed by Travel Iowa but rather the IOWA DOT (Mary Stahlhut).

Chairwoman Pfeffer gave an update on the Iowa Byways Coalition meeting she attended in April and a telephone conference in May, the Iowa Byways Foundation, and the Iowa State Fair.

Commission discussed whether to participate in the Iowa State Fair booth located in the Iowa DOT and Iowa State Patrol booth area under the Grandstand with a cost of approximately \$200 per day. Stahlhut commented our booth area is double the size that is available in the Varied Industries building. Our booth area will be air conditioned this year as well. Those commissioners that worked in 2016 commented it was well worth participating in this venue and saw considerable traffic at our booth. Commissioners chose Saturday Aug 12th as GRR day to work from 9:00 AM to 9:00 PM. It was indicated we might work a half day on August 13th if needed. We will use the 10 State GRR Brochures, Iowa GRR Tear off Sheet and the I-Center brochures. Martin Graber, Jay Schweitzer, Edith Pfeffer, Dan Peterson and Jean Peiton and Kurt Brandenburg have volunteered for the booth. If commissioners are working the booth, they should book a hotel now because there is another large event (Solheim Golf Cup) in Des Moines that weekend. Moved Schweitzer, Second Graber, Motion passed to purchase booth at Iowa State Fair for Aug 12th and August 13th if needed. Lode stated the Iowa Tourism office does not participate in the Iowa State Fair because everyone has gone back to school and families are not planning travel and the Iowa Tourism office feels it is not the time to promote.

Discussion on joining Iowa Byways Foundation: Stahlhut commented that our participation would help with the Art Project along the River. Currently serving for GRR on the coalition are Edith Pfeffer and Julie Allesee, retired CVB and Chamber Director both from Clinton. Stahlhut stated the Coalition has two conference calls a year. Foundation Board raises money and directs what projects the money is directed to. Coalition participation provides you a voice for the work the Foundation does. There is NO cost to join the coalition. Troy Seifert, Iowa DOT and former Technical Advisor to MRPC, started this effort so that the State Byways had collaboration statewide. Pollock moved to pay \$500 dues to the Iowa Byways Foundation. Graber seconded to move the motion to further discussion. Following discussion, a vote was taken with Pollock

voting yes, Schweitzer, Regan, Graber abstained from voting and Pfeffer voted no. Motion died for lack of interest. Schweitzer moved to table the discussion and it died for lack of a second.

Pfeffer advised the Commission of 2018 Eastern Iowa Tourism meetings. Iowa MPRC has been approached to host one of the meeting dates. As a host, you have an opportunity to present about your Byway. Graber moved/Schweitzer second to bid to host the March 7th 2018 meeting and second choice May 2, 2018. Motion carried.

Stahlhut reported our GRR Signage Project continues to have a punch list with outstanding work and have ongoing meetings between the contractor and the DOT office. The Signage project which is the installation of the GRR signs is not complete and beginning our fifth year since the awarding of the Federal Scenic Byway grant dollars for this project in 2012. There are approximately one dozen signs missing and between 20 and 30 signs to be corrected. Stahlhut reported that newly designated State Byways in 2016, Covered Bridges and White Pole Road have signage projects in the works.

Pfeffer asked that the Iowa GRR logo be sent to the I-Centers for use on their materials. Stahlhut stated that a marketing call would be needed to incorporate the usage agreement of our logo. Stahlhut agreed to put together the call and the usage agreement similar to the other Byways usage agreement.

Pfeffer asked all Commissioners to review pages 12-18 and 24 & 25 of last year's 2016 annual report and fulfill the responsibilities that need to be completed to close out our current fiscal year.

Pfeffer asked we develop an invitation list of guests for the National MRPC Dinner September 20, 2017 at the Empty Nest Winery and each commissioner is to send your list with current addresses of invitees to Pfeffer by June 15th.

1. All State Senators and State Reps.
2. State Elected officials.
3. DNR Randy Schultz will provide DNR Staff names
4. Shawna Lode to advise what staff from Iowa Tourism
5. Board of Supervisors and Mayors from our Counties and Corridor Cities
6. Core of Engineers: Our Mississippi Curriculum needed to be distributed in Marquette: Sabrina Chandler, Ron Deiss. Deiss and Chandler to provide list of guests from Core of Engineers.
7. Welcome Center and CVB staff names and addresses.

Shawna Lode will contact the CVBs and Eastern Iowa Tourism to inform them of the September 2017 National MRPC meeting in Marquette.

Discussion and Review followed on the 2017 goals and accomplishments.

1. Visits to the I-Centers
2. Attending City Council and Board of Supervisors meetings to request Stakeholder funding present annual reports
3. Meeting with the State Legislators
4. Meeting with the Governor and his staff –Presenting the annual reports
5. Attending Iowa Byway Meetings and conference calls
6. Completed update work for the 10 State Map/Brochure
7. Mailing of fund raising letters to Stakeholders in the Corridor
8. Distribution of our brochures, maps and Our Mississippi Curriculum
9. Attended Regional Planning Meetings to Present project needs for MRPC
10. Radio and Billboard marketing plans for FY17
11. Collaborated with Iowa Tourism office, DNR and County Conservation Boards.
12. Presented annual report to Iowa DOT Commission.

Pfeffer reported on the Lansing Bridge report. Meeting coming up that Commission will be notified of.

Motion to adjourn at 2:30 p.m. Graber/Schweitzer Second. Motion carried.

Submitted by Jane Regan, Acting Secretary