



Iowa Mississippi River Parkway Commission
July 7, 2026
Toolesboro Mounds and Museum
6568 Toolesboro Avenue, Wapello, Iowa
319-766-4018

The meeting was called to order by Chair, Katie Hammond

Members Present: Roger Thomas, Lisa Walsh, Kirk Brandenberger, Eric Furnas, Val Reinke and Ann Geiger,

Absent: Kevin Firnstahl

Others: Lora Friest – Iowa Dept of Economic Development; Emily Whaley - DOT, Cindy Nagel, Clinton Preservation Commission, Jason Duba – City of Dubuque, Susan Snow – Effigy Mounds

Introductions were made and then Hammond provided a brief description of the Toolesboro Mounds and Museum.

On motion by Thomas, with a second by Walsh, the minutes of the April 7, 2026 regular meeting were approved.

On motion by Furnas, with a second by Brandenberger, the minutes of the June 19, 2026 called meeting were approved.

The Commission reviewed the current expenditures and reviewed the upcoming FY27 budget. The Chair asked who would be attending the national meeting in West Memphis, Arkansas on October 6-8, 2026 and of those who would be driving or flying. Those planning on attending include Hammond, Walsh, and Geiger. Furnas will determine his attendance at a later date, and Nagel will attend if she is appointed to the Commission. All commissioners stated that they would be driving and carpooling, rather than flying for the conference this year. With that information, Thomas motioned to approve the FY27 expense report after moving \$1000 out of Work Plan #3, Commercial Travel (airfare) and putting \$500 into Work Plan #3 Personal Car (out of state) and \$500 into Meals (out-of-state) leaving just \$50 in the Commercial Travel line item. There was a second by Brandenburger and the motion passed with all ayes.

The Commission was updated by Reinke on the Iowa Tourism Co-op advertising in which Reinke was previously approved to bid on items up to \$11,000. Reinke was able to secure a dedicated email for May 2027 in the amount of \$3,000 and an organic post for \$2,500. She is still waiting to hear if we have been approved for content ads. Reinke applied for two slots at \$1,500 each. If all are secured the cost will be \$8,500. Motion by Thomas to approve acceptance of Iowa Tourism advertising of email, content ads and organic post, and for Reinke to sign on behalf of the Commission. The motion was seconded by Walsh and passed with all ayes.

Motion to approve National dues of \$15,000 pending legal approval was made by Furnas, with a second by Thomas, the motion carried with all ayes.

Geiger gave a report on the YouTube advertising. For the first year, according to the IHeart representative Jodi Sojka, the campaign was a success. Geiger and Thomas worked with Sojka and will use the metrics to improve the program, if the Commission approves, next year.

Hammond encouraged commissioners to look into the various advertising options and to bring ideas and dollar amounts to the next meeting. She is asking commissioners to be more proactive and diversity the advertising to reach a wider audience. A quote for an ad in the Iowa Sportsman magazine was shared as a potential way to reach a new audience.

There was discussion about investigating the possibility of offering a bus tour. Snow said they have paid for birding guides, and they have a small amount of money, around \$1,000, they can pay for educational items. A bus tour might qualify. The Commission will look at costs for next meeting and get ideas from I Centers.

On motion by Thomas with a second by Brandenberger the Commission approved sending a letter of support requested by Jason Duba from the City of Dubuque, for a grant to build a two-way bicycle track in the City of Dubuque along the Great River Road. Motion carried with all ayes.

Hammond presented the Commission with a request from Keep Iowa Beautiful to partner on litter clean-ups along the Great River Road. While the commission is in favor of the idea, it was decided that this would need to be done by groups along the GRR and not organized by the MRPC at this time.

Chairman's report

With the discussion on the National Meeting already taken place to assist with budget approval, the National byways kiosks grant with the National Scenic Byways Program Phase 2 kiosk locations was discussed. Hammond has been working with Lily Jensen on the project where they want to include 2 kiosks for each Byway. McGregor and Muscatine will receive the two GRR Byway interpretive signs. If the grant is awarded, these stand-alone signs will be designed in installed promoting travel along Iowa's Great River Road and highlighting the Interpretive Centers.

Commissioners were reminded to take the IPIB mandatory training for Iowa's Sunshine Laws if they had not already done so.

The election of officers was held with a motion by Thomas to keep the current slate, and a second by Brandenburg. The motion carried.

Officers remain: Chair: Katie Hammond

Vice-Chair: Lisa Walsh

Treasurer: Roger Thomas

Secretary: Ann Geiger

Whaley reviewed the changes to Senate File 2088 and Iowa Code 308 which govern the state's impact on the Commission. One of the most discussed was an economic impact statement report to the Governor and legislature that will be due annually on December 15. There was much discussion regarding how and what to provide. A subcommittee was created to work on the FY26 Economic Impact of the Great River Road that includes Val Reinke, Roger Thomas, Kirk Brandenburg, Eric Furnas, and Katie Hammond.

National committee appointments and reports

Marketing Committee - Brandenburg said he is supposed to be on the committee but has received no information as to the meetings. Hammond will follow up.

Transportation - Walsh said it is still meeting on the GIS maps.

Environment, Recreation and Agriculture - No report

Heritage and Culture - Geiger said the focus was on the national meeting

Ex-officio Member Report

Lora Friest reminded the group that the Iowa Museum Association is gathering information about museums in the state. She encouraged all the I-Centers to fill out the survey.

Next meeting will be on Wednesday, September 2, 2026 at Effigy Mounds National Monument in Allamakee County.