



**Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission**  
**1st Quarter Meeting – March 15, 2018**  
**State Office Building, St. Paul MN**  
**MINUTES – Draft**

**Commissioners Present**

Scott Bradley – Transportation Appointee  
Lisa Havelka – Tourism Appointee  
Lauren Larson – Grand Rapids to Brainerd  
Cordelia Pierson – Elk River to Hastings  
Sen. Patricia Torres Ray  
Anne Lewis – At Large  
Andrea Kajer – Historical Society Appointee  
Karl Samp – Brainerd to Elk River  
(via phone until 3:10)

**Technical Advisors/Staff Present**

Carol Zoff – Transportation  
John Anfinson - NPS

Gina Bonsignore – Natural Resources  
David Kelliher – Historical Society  
Diane Henry-Wangensteen – LCC  
Greg Hubinger – LCC  
Chris Miller – Staff

**Commissioners/Technical Advisors Absent**

Rep. Sheldon Johnson  
Sen. David Senjem  
Paul Hugunin – Agriculture Appointee  
Sheronne Mulry – Hastings to Iowa Border  
Nancy Salminen – Itasca to Grand Rapids  
Keith Parker – Natural Resources Appointee

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Meeting called to order at 2:35 p.m. by Vice Chair Pierson followed by introductions. New members Lisa Havelka and Lauren Larson were welcomed. A quorum was present by phone at 2:45 and in person at 3:10.

**Budget Report:** Report in the meeting packet was referenced.

**Executive Committee Report:** Minutes in the meeting packet were referenced.

**Regional Meetings/Elections Update:** Miller reported that Headwaters/Northwoods and Crossings Region Meetings were canceled due to weather/road conditions and email votes were conducted. Congratulations to Nancy Salminen (Headwaters/Northwoods) and Lauren Larson (Crossings) on their election to the Commission. Scenic Region Meeting was held on February 28 - congratulations to Karl Samp on election to another term.

**Approve Today's Agenda and Minutes from 11/9/17:** Motion by Andrea Kajer, seconded by Scott Bradley to approve the agenda and minutes as presented. A roll call vote was taken with all voting yes – Larson, Samp, Pierson, Torres Ray, Lewis, Kajer, Havelka, Bradley. Motion carried.

**Consider Change to 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Meeting Date:** Meeting is currently scheduled for November 15, which now conflicts with MN Scenic Byways Conference. November 8 and 29 were discussed as alternate dates and will be brought to the Chair for consideration.

**MN-MRPC Staffing – Proposal Review Process:** Andrea Kajer and Anne Lewis volunteered to work with Rep. Johnson on proposal process for a new MN-MRPC staffing contract.

**MRPC Semi Annual Meeting – April 11 – 13, Quincy, IL:** Anne Lewis, Sheronne Mulry, Karl Samp (Pilot registration/travel funded by MRPC) and Carol Zoff (MnDOT) will attend and report back.

**Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative (MRCTI) 2020 Meeting:** Carol Zoff shared details on an opportunity to potentially co-locate the National MRPC Meeting with the MRCTI Meeting in September 2020, in Bemidji. Motion by Anne Lewis, seconded by Scott Bradley to recommend that the MRPC consider holding the 2020 Annual Meeting in Bemidji, in coordination with MRCTI. Roll call vote taken with all voting yes – Larson, Samp, Pierson, Torres Ray, Lewis, Kajer, Havelka, Bradley. Motion carried.

**National MRPC Committee Reports:** Anne Lewis - Communications/Marketing Committee efforts include 2018 GRR 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary; upcoming culinary contest/promotion; and Drive the Great River Road

Month in September. Karl Samp - Board of Directors efforts include a benefits of membership document under development. Also noted that National Geographic Mississippi River Geotourism website remains operational for now, MRCC meeting coming up soon in St. Louis. MRPC National Office is harvesting data from the Nat Geo site in case it closes down. 2019 will be the "Year of the Great River Road" for the MRCC. Carol Zoff – Transportation Committee is working on a Corridor Management Plan for the full 10 state Great River Road. All committees will be involved.

**Plan Your Trip Interactive Mapping Tool:** Carol Zoff and Boxuan Xia provided a demonstration of the current version of the tool. The map includes 750+ places to see and things to do along the MN Mississippi River/Great River Road along with navigation and transit details. Suggestions included providing a mechanism to search for multiple types of resources in a certain area at the same time; and communication with DNR and partner organizations that developed the "Recreation Compass" about lessons learned. A full launch is planned in time for "Drive the Great River Road Month" in September. Soft launch to take place in early summer and feedback will be sought. Draft survey was referenced in the meeting packet. Members will be asked to take the survey and also for recommendations on others to involve in the process. Promotional material such as a rack card was suggested.

**GRR Maps for Summer Travel Season:** Discussion regarding possible purchase/shipping of National GRR maps to both fill the need and highlight the Great River Road 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary. General consensus to proceed.

**Bonding Requests for GRR Community Projects – Consider Letters of Support:** Details on projects requesting letters of support were provided in packet form and referenced. Testimony was given by Tom Evers of the Minneapolis Parks Foundation and Kirk Pederson, in favor of the requests for the Great Northern Greenway and Metro Regional Parks. Motion by Karl Samp, seconded by Anne Lewis to approve letters of support for all projects listed in the packet with the exception of the Metro Regional Parks request due to portions not related to the Mississippi River. Motion carried.

Discussion recommending additional outreach and a more comprehensive process in the future to identify Mississippi River/Great River Road related bonding projects. Motion by Anne Lewis, seconded by Lauren Larson to arrange a special MN-MRPC meeting as needed via phone to consider additional letters. Motion carried, with Samp voting no. Anne Lewis and David Kelliher volunteered to help with process improvement. Topic will also be brought to Executive Committee.

**MN Scenic Byways Strategic Plan:** Carol Zoff provided background and thanked the Commission for their responses to the email requesting feedback. The plan will be rolled out for implementation next fall.

**Border to Border Trail Proposed Route:** Overview of process included in meeting packet. Carol Zoff and Nancy Salminen have reviewed draft maps; their comments are on page 14 and will be forwarded.

**Mississippi Multimedia Gallery:** A project update was included in the meeting packet along with a draft letter of support for inclusion in promotional packets. Motion by Karl Samp, seconded by Scott Bradley to provide the letter with modifications to clarify the MN-MRPC's role related to support of fundraising. Motion carried.

**Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids:** Handout included in meeting packet.

**Brainerd to Elk River:** Handout included in meeting packet and referenced by Karl Samp.

**Elk River to Hastings:** Cordelia Pierson reported on a Dakota County project currently on hold, variety of river efforts in Minneapolis including the East of the River Group, and an initiative by Xcel Energy to plant hundreds of trees.

**Explore MN:** Lisa Havelka shared information on the recent Minnesota Tourism Conference – presentations and materials are available online. All were encouraged to subscribe to the EMT Express electronic newsletter. Discussion on working with communities to leverage the Mississippi River/GRR story.

**Historical Society:** David Kelliher thanked members for their letter of support for the Historic Fort Snelling bonding request. Project would rehabilitate two historic buildings, landscape to provide focus on the river, and expand storytelling to include a broader representation. Historic site season will be starting soon. A temporary exhibit at the Capitol - "Water" – was noted.

**Natural Resources:** Gina Bonsignore reported that DNR is gearing up for the summer season and the number of visitors to properties has been growing annually. There is a focus on teaching people outdoor activities. Fort Snelling State Park has been designated a "Gateway Park" for the system. Activities are being planned to recognize the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Legacy program.

**National Park Service:** John Anfinson highlighted the paddle share program – now to span Coon Rapids though St. Paul. "Plant for the Future" is an effort in partnership with the Mississippi Park Connection – will include vegetation mapping of the full 72-mile MNRRA corridor. Major changes are likely coming for the river in the Twin Cities. The US Army Corps of Engineers Disposition Study for the gorge will begin this spring. American Rivers is recommending removal of locks and restoration of rapids.

**Transportation:** Scott Bradley provided background on MnDOT's efforts to re-sign several byways this summer, including the Great River Road. Work is scheduled to begin in April. Funding is now being sought for phase II in FY '19 for additional byways, then a final phase the following year. Carol Zoff provided the attached report and shared details.

**Next Meeting** – June 14, 2018, 2:30 – 5:00 p.m., State Office Building **300 North**

**Adjournment** - The meeting was adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

## MnDOT March 2018 Update to Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota

### *GRR Wayshowing*

- Let a construction contract July 28, 2017 to resign entire Great River Road, Lady Slipper, Avenue of Pines, Paul Bunyan, Bluff Country and Apple Blossom byways by September 2018
- GRR CMP sign database identified the need and providing the format for project scoping and pre-design.
- Funding by FHWA, MnDOT and MnDNR
- Pre-Construction meeting 3/14/2018: Tentative completion of GRR portion by June 29, weather permitting.
- FYI: Phase 2 MN Scenic Byway sign project to be let approx. 1/2019 to include Waters of the Dancing Sky, King of Trails, Veterans Memorial, Lake Country and MN River Valley byways.

### *Minnesota Scenic Byway Advisory Committee – 13 members from byways and MnSB Commission/agencies*

- Developed a draft Minnesota Scenic Byway Program Strategic Plan –
  - Comments received from byways and staff through 2/28.
  - Final draft anticipated by Mid-April.
  - The 2018 MN SB Workshop to focus on plan implementation.
- Helps guide and prioritize MN Scenic Byway Program management
- Helps implement the MnSB MOU, renewed in 2016.
- Helps implement byway corridor management plans - 16 CMPs updated in 2015-16
- *Draft goals:*
  - **Education:** Identify and share knowledge and best practices.
  - **Funding:** Identify funding needs and sources where appropriate.
  - **Communication:** Develop public awareness, representation, engagement and support for Byways statewide.

### *National Advisory Committee on Travel and Tourism Infrastructure (NACTTI)*

- Developed national travel and tourism infrastructure survey distributed by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials – Committee on Planning
- Survey results described in a draft report, pending internal review.
  - 22 states replied between Jan 2 and 19, 2018
  - Replies represent a wide geographic distribution in the lower 48 states, but none from Alaska, Hawaii, territories or Tribes.
  - 2/3 of responding states are considering impacts to travel and tourism in project scoping, about 1/3 broadly and 2/3 specifically.
  - National Scenic Byway program cited as an example regional and national system framework offering engagement, measures and transportation purpose.
  - Many states rely on Commerce for tourism measures.
  - Funding, data and competing FHWA and state priorities and required measures are common barriers to more fully addressing impacts to travel and tourism.

### *Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trail Commission*

- February 3, 2018 presentation on MN-MRPC and common objectives each Commission shares, as well as CMP implementation achievements and next steps.

### *Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative*

- GMRPTC member and Bemidji Mayor Rita Albrecht and I spoke of the potential to collocate the Sept. 2020 Annual Meeting in Bemidji with the MRCTI.

### *Hamline University – Mississippi River Gallery*

- 3/13 introduced Hamline staff to Rob Williams, MnDOT Rest Area Program Manager to demonstrate and discuss the opportunity to place these in targeted facilities.