



Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission
2nd Quarter Meeting – June 2, 2022
Zoom Virtual Meeting
MINUTES – Draft

Commissioners Present

Sally Fineday – Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids
Megan Christianson – Grand Rapids to Brainerd
Karl Samp – Brainerd to Elk River
John Anfinson – Elk River to Hastings
Jennifer Weaver – Hastings to Iowa Border
Sen. David Senjem
Sen. Patricia Torres Ray
Rep. Kristin Robbins
Paul Hugunin – Agriculture Appointee
David Kelliher – Historical Society Appointee
Grant Wilson – Natural Resources Appointee
Lisa Havelka – Tourism Appointee
Anne Lewis – At Large Member

Technical Advisors/Staff Present

Kelli Bruns – Natural Resources
Tim Wilcox – Transportation
Carol Zoff – Transportation
Diane Henry Wangensteen – LCC
Carol Bisbee - LCC
Chris Miller – MN-MRPC Staff

Members Absent

Rep. Emma Greenman
Marni Karnowski, Transportation Appointee
Tucker Blythe, National Park Service

Meeting was called to order at 2:00 p.m. by Chair Senjem. A quorum was present. Sen. Senjem and Carol Zoff expressed thanks on behalf of the MN-MRPC to Jack Flom, MnDOT SEEDS Student Worker, for excellent work on MN Great River Road projects. Jack has graduated from the University of Minnesota, will now be leaving the SEEDS program and will be missed.

Approve Agenda: Motion by Anne Lewis and seconded by Megan Christianson to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried.

Approve Minutes from 2/23/22 and 4/8/22 Meetings: Motion by John Anfinson and seconded by Sen. Torres Ray to approve the February 23, 2022 and April 8, 2022 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried.

Informational Presentation – Three Rivers Park District – Plans, Projects & Program Along the Mississippi River: Jennifer DeJournett and Boe Carlson were welcomed to the meeting. Three Rivers Park District is a 27,000-acre park system with a seven-member board. It is the only regional park system in Minnesota. Information was shared about the Mississippi Gateway Redevelopment Project, South Pond Learning Lab, West Mississippi River Regional Trail, and land purchases along the Mississippi River in Dayton. Discussion followed, including questions that have been received from residents about the land acquisitions. Superintendent Carlson noted that activities and acquisitions are done in partnership with local communities. Thanks were noted to the presenters for the information shared.

Budget Report: The budget report in the meeting packet was referenced followed by discussion and consensus approval.

Regional Member Terms: Chris Miller reported that a proposed change to regional member terms was included in the Legislative Coordinating Commission's policy bill and became part of the State Government Finance Omnibus Bill. If adopted, regional members would serve four-year terms (instead of the current two-year terms). Staggering of the terms would also be defined to assist with Commission continuity. The bill was not passed during the legislative session but may be considered if a special session is called. If not, regional member terms will remain two years in length and elections for the Metro and Bluffs Regions would take place in the fall of 2022.

National MRPC Annual Meeting and Updates: Anne Lewis shared information on the 2022 MRPC Annual Meeting scheduled for September 7 – 9 in Memphis. The agenda will focus on working sessions to strengthen state commissions. Thursday will be a "State Dialogue Day" where all states will be asked to share practices of benefit to the other states, along with discussion on areas of need. Friday will be dedicated to technical committee work sessions. The agenda and

registration materials will be available soon. Sen. Senjem encouraged all members to consider attending, and Chris Miller and Diane Henry-Wangenstein reviewed the out-of-state travel request process.

MRPC Marketing Committee: Megan Christianson reported on Marketing Committee activities including Drive the Great River Road Month and the new ten-state Great River Road map. She recommended that a winter promotion be considered by the committee, which could be of help especially to smaller communities. The new ten-state map will be going to print soon. The majority of the Minnesota supply will likely go directly to Interpretive Centers but there should be some quantity remaining. Members interested in receiving maps were asked to contact Chris.

MRPC Culture & Heritage Committee: John Anfinson reported that the committee and MRPC National Office are working on outreach to Interpretive Centers, including requests for completion of an online profile to ensure that up to date information and photos are available for the map and other promotional use. There are still some Interpretive Centers that have not responded and the committee has been discussing how to handle this for the new map. 150,000 maps will be printed. The committee will continue to look at ways to better connect with and provide benefits to the Interpretive Centers.

MRPC Transportation Committee: Tim Wilcox reported on the most recent meeting including a presentation by Anne Lewis on coordination with other committees, discussion on the route alignment and signage, presentation by Wisconsin MRPC on their pollinator efforts, and other states considering U.S. Bicycle Route 45 designation for their portions of the Mississippi River Trail. Minnesota's segment of the Mississippi River Trail already holds this U.S. Bicycle Route designation.

Drive the Great River Road Month 2022: Paul Hugunin introduced Christina Iliev of the MN Department of Agriculture, who is leading efforts for the Drive the Great River Road Month promotion. The theme is Fall Harvest on the Great River Road, sponsored by Minnesota Grown. An overview of the plan for the promotion was included in the packet and presented, followed by discussion. Members indicated interest in partnering and participating and provided suggestions. A meeting with regional commissioners will be set up to discuss ideas for itineraries and Great River Road kits. Agency members will be contacted separately. Information will be shared with Commission members as plans continue to come together and a possible press event is planned (potentially at the State Fair). Assistance will be needed with distribution of information, social media sharing and representation at the press event.

GRR Roadside Storybook: Chris Miller and team members provided an update. The team met in March and May and has been reviewing information on the history of the project, existing panels, and storybook (interpretive panel) content for 21 counties developed 20+ years ago. MnDOT has organized all materials and made them available electronically. LCC is looking at options to develop a longer term secure web page to store the materials for team access and future use within an implementation project. The team recommends that all content be reviewed and updated and will be doing a review of two examples to develop a project scope for review of all content. Completion of the Roadside Storybook would potentially take place in two phases (if funding is secured) – content updating followed by panel fabrication and installation. Options to post content online will also be considered. A lead agency/organization and project manager will need to be identified prior to seeking funding. The project team will continue working on the project scope and cost estimate.

Partner Projects/Letter-of-Support Requests: Letter-of-support requests were considered for three projects – Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Wild Parsnip Project (National Scenic Byway grant application); Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe Tourism/Interpretive Center Project (National Scenic Byway grant application); and National Loon Center construction project (federal appropriation). Sally Fineday, Megan Christianson and Karl Samp shared information on the requests from their regions. Motion by Megan Christianson and seconded by Anne Lewis to authorize the letters of support as requested. Motion carried. Chris Miller reported that letters of support for National Scenic Byway grant applications were also provided for projects in Dakota County and Washington County as approved by members via email after initial discussion at the April 8 MN-MRPC special meeting.

Commission Members Updates/Other Business: David Kelliher reported on the new visitor center at Historic Fort Snelling, which opened to the public on May 28. The center will be open Wednesday through Sunday each week and has a focus on re-connecting people to the river. David suggested the site as a possible location for a future MN-MRPC meeting. Appreciation was noted to the MN-MRPC and individual members for support of the visitor center project.

Anne Lewis noted that the U.S. Postal Service has just released a new series of Mississippi River "Forever" stamps. All ten Mississippi River states are reflected and member were encouraged to pick up a set.

Diane Henry-Wangenstein provided an update on status of the MN-MRPC staffing contract. A formal Request for Proposal process is required periodically. The current contract expires at the end of August. A Request for Proposals for FY 23 – 24 services has been posted and placed in the State Register. Proposals are due June 30. Volunteers were requested to assist with the review process. Several members indicated interest and Diane will follow up.

Karl Samp reported that a groundbreaking event will be held on June 6 for the Brainerd Mississippi Riverfront Trailhead Park. LCCMR funds have been approved for this project and an additional \$1 million is still being sought to fund an amphitheater. Two tours are scheduled for early fall for groups from American Queen cruises, with Karl leading one and Kris VonBerge of the Little Falls Convention and Visitors Bureau serving as lead on the other tour.

Sen. Senjem noted that he will not be seeking re-election to the Minnesota Senate in November. He will remain in office until the new Senator is sworn in, and then a new MN-MRPC member and new MN-MRPC Chair will be needed. Sen. Senjem has been a member of the MN-MRPC for 20 years, since he first started in the Senate.

Next Meeting: August 11, 2022, from 2:00 to 4:30 p.m.

Adjournment: There being no further business, meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.