



Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission  
1st Quarter Meeting  
February 18, 2010  
State Office Building Room 500 North

**MINUTES – Approved 5/27/10**

**Commissioners Present**

Andy Golfis – Member At-Large  
Rep. Sheldon Johnson – MN-MRPC Chair  
Karl Samp – Brainerd to Elk River  
Frank Pafko – Transportation Appointee  
Jack Frost – Itasca to Grand Rapids (via phone)  
Sheronne Mulry – Hastings to Iowa Border  
Greg Murray – Natural Resources Appointee  
Paul Labovitz – Elk River to Hastings  
Al Withers – Agriculture (alternate)  
Rep. Greg Davids

**Tech Advisors & Staff Present**

Cheryl Offerman – Explore MN Tourism  
David Kelliher – Historical Society

**Tech Advisors & Staff Present,**

**Continued**

Carol Zoff – Transportation  
Greg Hubinger - LCC  
Chris Miller - Staff

**Others Present**

Ben Main (for Sen. Sandra Pappas)  
Mark Anderson – MN Scenic Byways Office

**Commissioners/Advisors Absent**

Don Frerichs – Explore MN Tourism Appointee  
John Schaubach – Grand Rapids to Brainerd  
Sen. Dave Senjem

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Meeting was called to order at 2:35 p.m. by Chairman Johnson, followed by introductions. A quorum was present.

**Approval of Agenda**

Commissioners reviewed the proposed meeting agenda. Commissioner Golfis requested addition of specific items under the work plan review/work group updates section. Commissioner Samp made a motion and Commissioner Golfis seconded to approve the agenda as amended. Motion passed unanimously.

**Approval of Minutes from November 19, 2009**

Minutes from the 2009 Fourth Quarter Meeting (November 19, 2009) were distributed. Commissioner Golfis made a motion and Commissioner Pafko seconded to approve the November 19 minutes as presented. Minutes were unanimously approved.

**Election of 2010 Officers**

Existing officers indicated their willingness to continue for 2010: Rep. Sheldon Johnson, Chair; Sheronne Mulry, Vice-Chair; Jack Frost, Treasurer; Andy Golfis, Secretary/At-Large Member. A motion was made by Commissioner Samp to elect the slate of officers as presented, seconded by Commissioner Pafko. The officers were elected unanimously.

**Review Financial Reports**

A report showing year-to-date status of the MN-MRPC operating budget was distributed and discussed. Commissioner Golfis made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Frost, to approve the financial report. Motion passed unanimously. Technical Advisor Hubinger of the Legislative Coordinating Commission provided an update on budget proposals affecting current and future years for commissions. The governor has proposed a 3% reduction on unspent portions of FY '10 budgets as well as 6% reductions for next year and the following biennium. Proposals will also be coming from the legislature and Mr. Hubinger will keep the MN-MRPC updated as the process continues. Commissioner Golfis noted the importance of maintaining funding and the annual opportunity to apply for 80% in National Scenic Byway grant funds if 20% local match can be secured.

### **Legislative Session Update**

Representative Johnson reported that the Supreme Court has ruled against the DNR, allowing a mansion to be built on a bluff overlooking the St. Croix River. Possible implications for the Mississippi River and Great River Road were discussed. Comments included the ruling being a setback for the State's Wild and Scenic Rivers; technicalities that could have impacted the ruling; balancing resource protection and development; local zoning working well in many areas; need for DNR representation on the MN-MRPC; role of various commissions, agencies and the legislature; and the overall best approach for the MN-MRPC in this arena. A motion was made by Commissioner Golfis, seconded by Commissioner Murray, authorizing a letter to the DNR Commissioner requesting MN-MRPC involvement in rule making for Wild and Scenic Rivers and Critical Area Designations. Motion passed unanimously.

Representative Davids reported that the bonding bill just passed, and advised that the MN-MRPC watch activities of the Cultural Heritage Finance Committee for possible project and funding opportunities related to water quality. Rep. Davids serves as lead Republican on that committee.

### **2010 National Scenic Byway Grants**

Mark Anderson, MN Scenic Byways Coordinator provided information on the National Scenic Byways Grant Program and increased national focus on larger scale projects and partnerships. Minnesota's levels of grant funding have gone down over the past few years. Over the last rounds of grants, many states seemed to have 4 – 6 projects funded, with those projects being strategic for the overall byway and state. Maryland received a large grant for a statewide effort involving multiple state agencies.

Carol Zoff reported on an ad-hoc meeting held earlier on 2/18 to discuss possible applications from the MN-MRPC and partners. All applications need to connect with the current Corridor Management Plan and show benefit to the byway traveler. Possible projects for grant applications were identified: MNRRA Visual Resource Protection Plan; Mn/DOT invasive species management; Great River Road interpretive panels (in 17 counties not covered in current implementation); paving remaining gravel sections of the GRR; restoration of historic waysides not eligible for the National Historic Register; web marketing/upgrade; MRT signage on local roads. Discussion regarding these options included: advice not to mix construction and planning projects; need for 20% in local matching funds; possibility of MN Legacy Funds as another resource; partnerships with other groups in the state working on Mississippi River related initiatives (St. Cloud, Brainerd, etc); increased partnerships with CVBs along the GRR. The MN deadline for National Scenic Byway grant applications in March 26. A group (Paul Labovitz, Sheronne Mulry, Karl Samp, Cheryl Offerman) volunteered to assist with decision making regarding a 2010 application from the MN-MRPC. The MN-MRPC will also have the opportunity to rank all applications received from entities along the MN Great River Road.

### **National MRPC Updates**

The 2010 MRPC Semi-Annual Meeting will be held in Baton Rouge, April 8-9. Chairman Johnson has confirmed approval for three non-legislators to attend representing the MN-MRPC. Anyone interested, please notify the MN-MRPC office and names will be forwarded to Chairman Johnson. The next MRPC board conference call is scheduled for February 19. Andy Golfis agreed to serve as Minnesota proxy on the call. The MRPC Marketing Committee will be planning a geocaching initiative for the summer of 2010, with a focus on Great River Road Interpretive Centers.

### **State MRPC Travel Updates & Upcoming Events**

**2010 Minnesota Tourism Conference:** Commissioner Samp reported on his attendance and goal of meeting CVB representatives from along the river to consider joint projects. He also noted a presentation by the Canadian Automobile Association and possible opportunities for marketing.

**Great River Gathering, St. Paul, May 13:** The MN-MRPC was represented by two attendees at last year's dinner, along with participation in the exhibit area in partnership with MNRRA. Commissioner Labovitz invited the MN-MRPC to partner again in 2010 by sharing MNRRA's exhibit space. Discussion determined that two dinner tickets will be purchased by the MN-MRPC again this year. An e-mail will be sent out to all members asking that anyone interested in the dinner or exhibit area reply to the MN-MRPC Office.

**2010 MN-MRPC Meeting Dates:** May 27, August 26 and November 18. All meetings are currently scheduled for 2:30 – 5:00 p.m. May and November meetings will be at the State Office Building in St. Paul. The August meeting will be held at a river site, with Commissioners Schaubach, Frost and Samp asked for recommendations. Details to be announced.

**Other Events:** Commissioner Mulry attended the Frozen Film Festival in Winona and suggested that the MN-MRPC consider booth/exhibit space at the event next year.

### **CapX 2020 Updates**

Chairman Johnson referred to the packet of materials everyone received today, including notes from an informational briefing held on 12/21/09 with details on CapX2020 routes affecting the Great River Road and suggested MN-MRPC actions; letters submitted by the MN-MRPC to date; and information on the upcoming public hearing for the St. Cloud to Monticello route. Commissioner Samp attended a public meeting on the St. Cloud to Monticello route and referred to information in his regional report. The MN-MRPC will continue to monitor developments related to the Bemidji-Grand Rapids, St. Cloud-Monticello and Hampton-LaCrosse routes as they affect the Great River Road and will submit comments as appropriate. Members discussed overall impact to the Great River Road and other communications related to this concern. Commissioner Golfis made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Samp, authorizing an MN-MRPC letter to the Commissioner of Transportation describing our recommendations and preferred route, and including maps showing Great River Road intrinsic qualities. Motion passed unanimously.

### **2010-11 Work Plan and Work Group Updates**

The 2010-11 Work Plan was developed from information generated at the 11/19/09 MN-MRPC meeting. Copies were distributed and everyone was asked to review the listed tasks, along with confirming their participation on MN-MRPC Work Groups and National MRPC Committees. An updated roster of groups and committees is attached.

Commissioner Golfis explained current concerns under the areas of Capital Improvement (overall quality monitoring of the byway) and Economic Development (resource protection). The wood plank section of the Great River Road has been closed in Minneapolis, near the Mill City Museum and Stone Arch Bridge. This situation results in difficulty for the byway traveler and limits access to a historic portion of the Great River Road. Also, debris from the 35W bridge collapse remains in the Mississippi River, which is detrimental to the river and negatively impacts the intrinsic qualities of the Great River Road National Scenic Byway. Discussion indicated that members shared concern regarding these issues. Commissioner Golfis made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Samp, authorizing a letter to the Mayor regarding the closed portion of the Great River Road. Motion passed unanimously. After further discussion, Commissioner Golfis made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Labovitz, authorizing a letter regarding both the closed section of the Great River Road and the river debris, to be sent to the Mayor of Minneapolis and copied to area legislators, Commissioner Sorel, and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. Motion passed unanimously.

The Marketing Work Group has been working on development of map tablets, as part of the current marketing grant. Draft layouts for the Metro Mississippi and Northwoods Mississippi regions were distributed and discussed. These regions were chosen as the pilots for the project with the other four regional designs to follow once content and layout are finalized for the pilots.

### **Agency and Regional Updates**

**Camp Ripley Veteran's State Trail:** A group of partners in the Little Falls area is working toward development of the Camp Ripley Veteran's State Trail, a multi-use trail that would link the Paul Bunyan Trail to the Soo Line Trail. The trail would provide increased opportunities for byway travelers. A letter of support from the MN-MRPC has been requested. Commissioner Samp made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Labovitz, authorizing a letter of support for the Camp Ripley Veteran's State Trail. Motion passed unanimously.

**MRT Project and Historic Roadside Properties:** Technical Advisor Zoff reported. Mn/DOT is working to access trunk highway funds to map and sign state/trunk highway sections of the MRT statewide (approx. 25% of the MRT). Goal is to completed signage by next riding season. Last year, the National Grange marker in Elk River and Camp Ripley wall projects were completed under the historic roadside properties restoration project. Work is underway on the Burns Avenue Overlook. Next in line are the St. Cloud Historic Marker; Sibley Pioneer Church Memorial; MN State Training School Walls (Red Wing). The Lake City Concourse project will be the most complex and expensive of the upcoming restorations. Work will also be done at Reads Landing; La Crescent and Reno Springs.

**Mn/DOT:** Commissioner Pafko updated the group on major grants for passenger rail, including planning funds for a Chicago to Twin Cities rail line, part of which would be along the Mississippi.

**Brainerd to Elk River Region:** Commissioner Samp referred to his written report and also reported on continuing work to eliminate the gap in the Brainerd area, with consideration at a city council meeting coming soon. He recently completed the MN Master Naturalist Program and noted the program could be a good resource for the MN-MRPC.

**Elk River to Hastings Region:** Commissioner Labovitz reported that he has met with most mayors and county managers in the Metro Mississippi region to discuss both MNRRA and the MN-MRPC. May 14 will be the kickoff canoe paddle for summer 2010 Urban Wilderness Canoe Area programming. On April 29, EMT, DNR and other partners will be holding a one day bicycle tourism summit. The "Great River Race" is being planned for next year, to involve teams in 24-person canoes raising funds. Commissioner Labovitz invited the MN-MRPC to fill a canoe for the event.

#### **Next Meeting**

Thursday, May 27, 2010 • 2:30 – 5:00 p.m. • State Office Building Room 500 North

#### **Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:35 p.m.

**MN-MNRPC**  
**Work Group and National Committee Rosters, 2/18/10**

**MN-MRPC Capital Improvement**

Andy Golfis  
Sheldon Johnson  
Carol Zoff

**MN-MRPC Economic Development**

Paul Labovitz, Chair  
Don Frerichs  
Frank Pafko  
John Schaubach  
Sandy Pappas  
Carol Zoff  
Greg Murray

**MN-MRPC Marketing**

Sheronne Mulry, Chair  
Paul Labovitz  
Robin Kinney  
Cheryl Offerman  
Carol Zoff

**MN-MRPC Organization**

Karl Samp, Chair  
David Kelliher  
Carol Zoff

**National MRPC Board**

Sheldon Johnson  
Sheronne Mulry, Proxy

**National MRPC Culture/Heritage**

Sheronne Mulry, Co-Chair

**National MRPC Transportation**

Carol Zoff, Co-Chair  
John Schaubach, Alternate  
Frank Pafko

**National MRPC ERA**

Sheldon Johnson  
Karl Samp, Alternate

**National MRPC Marketing**

Jack Frost  
Cheryl Offerman  
Dave Senjem, Alternate



**Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota  
Regional Updates  
February 2010**

**Brainerd to Elk River – Commissioner Samp**

St. Cloud continues to work on planning for a community focused on the Mississippi River. We have asked to be included in the citizen group involved with the planning.

A citizen group in Brainerd, initiated by the latest cohort in Blandin Leadership, has begun a planning process on how to bring the Mississippi River to the forefront in development efforts in Brainerd and Baxter. I have attended one of the meetings. The next one is next Tuesday which I am unable to attend.

Finally, I attended the CapX 2020 hearing for the draft environmental impact study for the project. I read and submitted our "talking points" memo. The meeting to take testimony with the Administrative Law Judge will be held on March 8<sup>th</sup>. We should share the same information at that time. Sherburne County was not in favor of our suggested Option D route as that would take it through their county. I think we should clarify what a "modified" route D means. Their biggest concern was down Highway 8. The majority of those who spoke were in favor of a route along I-94.