



Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission
2nd Quarter Meeting
May 27, 2010
State Office Building Room 500 North

MINUTES – Draft

Commissioners Present

Andy Golfis – Member At-Large
Rep. Sheldon Johnson – MN-MRPC Chair
Frank Pafko – Transportation Appointee
Jack Frost –Itasca-Grand Rapids (phone)
Sheronne Mulry – Hastings-Iowa Border (phone)
Paul Labovitz – Elk River-Hastings
Rep. Greg Davids
Don Frerichs – Explore MN Tourism Appointee
Sen. Sandra Pappas
John Schaubach – Grand Rapids to Brainerd
Sen. Dave Senjem

Tech Advisors & Staff Present

Cheryl Offerman – Explore MN Tourism
David Kelliher – Historical Society

Tech Advisors & Staff Present,

Continued

Carol Zoff – Transportation
Cynthia Wheeler – Natural Resources
Chris Miller - Staff

Others Present

Dave Seykora – Dept of Transportation

Commissioners/Advisors Absent

Robin Kinney – Agriculture Appointee
Greg Murray – Natural Resources Appointee
Andrea Hart-Kajer – Historical Society Appointee
Karl Samp – Brainerd to Elk River

Meeting was called to order at 2:40 p.m. by Chairman Johnson, followed by introductions. A quorum was present. Cynthia Wheeler, new MN-MRPC Technical Advisor from the Department of Natural Resources, was welcomed to the Commission. It was also noted that Andrea Hart-Kajer will be joining the Commission as the new appointee from the Historical Society.

Approval of Agenda

Commissioners reviewed the proposed meeting agenda. Commissioner Davids made a motion and Commissioner Labovitz seconded to approve the agenda as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes from February 18, 2010

Minutes from the 2010 First Quarter Meeting (February 18, 2010) were distributed. Commissioner Frost made a motion and Commissioner Labovitz seconded to approve the February 18 minutes as presented. Minutes were unanimously approved.

Commission Business – FY '10 Financial Report and FY '11 Draft Budget

A report showing current status of the FY '10 MN-MRPC operating budget was distributed and discussed. There is likely to be carry over into FY '11 partially due to longer than anticipated timelines on the current marketing grant project resulting in required local match for the remaining projects being carried forward; and lower than anticipated expenses related to the 2009 Annual Meeting. The Commission requested that the Marketing Work Group develop a plan for allocation of carry over funds; agreed to by Work Group Chair Mulry. A draft line item budget for FY '11 was distributed along with explanations of the amounts. Special considerations in the FY '11 budget include the 2010 MRPC Annual Meeting in La Crosse, Wisconsin, which provides a good opportunity for MN-MRPC members to attend a national MRPC meeting. Commissioner Golfis made a motion to approve the FY '10 financial report and the FY '11 draft budget as presented, seconded by Commissioner Labovitz. Motion passed unanimously.

National MRPC Updates

Commissioners Golfis and Frerichs reported on the 2010 MRPC Semi-Annual meeting held in Baton Rouge. Attendance was strong from southern MRPC states. Field trips focused on local issues of the Louisiana/Delta region, including revitalization of the river. The field trips were excellent but left less time for committee meetings. Commissioner Golfis noted the importance of the national meetings to learn about what the other states are doing related to the river and Great River Road, and bring those ideas

back for consideration in Minnesota. Commissioner Frerichs reminded the group about the National Endowment Committee, preparing information for rollout at the 2010 Annual Meeting in La Crosse.

State MRPC Travel Updates and Upcoming Events

Great River Gathering: Senator Pappas, Commissioner Labovitz and Commissioner Mulry attended the event on May 13 at the St. Paul River Centre. All shared that it was an excellent event highlighting many riverfront improvements, with approximately 1,200 people in attendance at the dinner. The National Park Service/MNRRRA purchased exhibit space which was shared with Wilderness Inquiry and the MN-MRPC.

Tour de Pepin: Technical Advisor Zoff will be participating in this third annual bicycle event, starting in Lake City. The event has grown each year and offers different lengths for participation.

Bicycle Tourism Summit: Commissioner Labovitz participated in the summit, with over 150 others also in attendance. The focus of the summit was discussion on development, packaging and promotion of trails. If a statewide trail system is developed, the Mississippi River could be a logical spine for many trails.

MRT Meetings: Technical Advisor Zoff updated the group on a series of meetings coming up in preparation for MN/DOT's MRT sign project on all trunk highway segments. MN-MRPC members will be notified of the meetings, which will be offered in each destination area. Also, bike rides along the route will be conducted in 50 mile segments and all are welcome to join in for any number of miles.

MRT Inc: Commissioner Labovitz is a member of the MRT Inc. Board and recently attended their meeting in Memphis, which included activities on the Mississippi. He reports that the concept of a Headwaters to Gulf bicycle trail is gaining momentum.

Legislative Parks & Trails Strategy Committee: Commissioner Schaubach has been invited to serve on this committee and would appreciate input from other MN-MRPC members.

Dog Days of Stockholm: Commissioner Mulry is working with a group in Stockholm in planning this August 13 – 14 event celebrating writing, literature and furry friends. The Lake Pepin circle tour is mentioned in the promotional info, which includes the Minnesota Great River Road. For details, please visit www.dogdaysofstockholm.com. There was general discussion about promotion of the MN-MRPC at local festivals and events, including ideas such as parade participation.

CapX 2020 – Recent Actions and Future Plans

Chairman Johnson welcomed Dave Seykora, from the Office of the Chief Counsel at MN/DOT. Mr. Seykora provided background on the current status of the three CapX projects affecting the Minnesota Great River Road. The three projects are in different stages as noted below. Local communities and the general public have opportunities for input. Final location decisions will be made by the Public Utilities Commission.

Bemidji – Grand Rapids Project: All deadlines for evidence have passed and the Administrative Law Judge is expected to issue a report by early July. There were three proposed routes. It appears likely that the preferred route will become the recommended route, which is relatively good news for the Great River Road.

St. Cloud – Monticello Project: The report from the Administrative Law Judge was recently released and recommends the I-94 corridor for location of the power lines. The Office of Energy Security (OES) will issue a report by June 25, with a Public Utilities Commission hearing scheduled for early July. The OES recommendations will be very detailed. Mr. Seykora reported that MN/DOT will be providing recommended language to be included in the OES report, and suggested inclusion of language regarding mitigation along the Great River Road as well. Draft text was distributed to Commission members for review. 20 miles of the Great River Road will be affected by this project. Commission members discussed the potential impacts. It was decided that a group of MN-MRPC members, accompanied by Mr. Seykora, will visit the affected area and make mitigation recommendations to be submitted to OES. Representatives from OES will be invited to participate in the visit.

Commissioner Pafko made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Golfis, authorizing a letter of support for the response and language being submitted to the OES by MN/DOT regarding the St. Cloud – Monticello Route. Motion passed unanimously.

Hampton – Rochester - La Crosse Project: Commissioner Mulry reported on her participation in the Advisory Task Force formed to identify issues to be included in the scope of the Environmental Impact Statement for the Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse project. The last meeting of the task force will be held on June 3. After that date, the MN-MRPC will remain on the project list to receive activity updates and opportunities for comment. Commissioner Mulry is also communicating with the Wisconsin MRPC since the route will impact the Great River Road in both states and will be visible from both sides of the river. Mr. Seykora noted that the review process for this line is in the early stages and is likely to continue for a year or more. Of the proposed routes, the McCarthy Lake Alternative Route could be of greatest concern because it would run parallel to the Great River Road for 2.5 miles.

Camp Ripley Veterans Trail

A letter of support was sent as authorized at the last Commission meeting. Funding was included in the bonding bill at one point but did not make it through to the final version.

Minneapolis Plank Road/Bridge Debris Concerns

A letter outlining MN-MRPC concerns was sent as authorized at the last Commission meeting. Commissioner Golfis has been following up with the City of Minneapolis. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board has responded, noting that repair of the closed plank road section of the Great River Road has been approved, and the RFP for the project will be out this summer. MN-MRPC members raised questions about the repair plan and whether it will maintain the current scenic and historic value of the road using similar materials. Staff will request more information and will forward to Commission members. The MN-MRPC has been contacted by an attorney representing the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board regarding the 35W bridge debris. They will be taking legal action on removal of the debris from the Bohemian Flats area. Chairman Johnson will follow up and MN-MRPC members will consider further actions as needed.

Critical Area Rulemaking Project

A letter requesting MN-MRPC participation was sent as authorized. Commissioner Labovitz was invited to participate and reported on a recent meeting and scenic quality workshop. Recommendations are due to the Department of Natural Resources by June 11 regarding the different geographical features that should be grouped together for the Critical Area designation. A report will then be prepared in the fall for consideration by the Legislature.

2010 National Scenic Byway Grants

As directed at the last meeting, a group met to discuss a possible joint application involving the MN-MRPC, National Park Service/MNRRRA, Department of Transportation and other partners. The decision was for MNRRRA to move forward with their 2010 application for a Visual Resource Protection Plan, as updated from 2009 and supported by several organizations. The other partners will consider applications in 2011. MN-MRPC members discussed whether to begin planning for a FY '11 application focused on development of a new comprehensive Corridor Management Plan. It was agreed that discussions should begin and the project was referred to the Organization Work Group.

Work Group Updates

Several work group priorities were discussed as part of previous agenda items. In general, work groups might want to consider a summer meeting to review recent activities and plan for FY '11. Staff will follow up with work group chairs. The Marketing Work Group reports that the regional map tablets will be printed and shipped soon. Each Regional Commissioner will receive 200 for their own distribution and Commission business. The MN-MRPC office will also receive 200 copies of each regional map for general distribution.

Agency and Regional Updates

Historical Society: Technical Advisor Kelliher reported that the Historical Sites season begins in earnest this week. A new brochure highlighting all sites in the state was distributed. The recently passed bonding bill includes funds for Fort Snelling, but not improvements to the Oliver Kelley Farm. An update on

activities related to the Fort Snelling Upper Post and related site visit should be considered for a future MN-MRPC meeting. It was also noted that Legacy Funds have resulted in some good history projects being funded around the state.

Natural Resources: Technical Advisor Wheeler reported on a project underway at the Mississippi Headwaters and also planning efforts beginning again for Mississippi Whitewater Park. Outreach efforts in partnership with Stearns County, St. Cloud State University, and others continue and there will be a river activity day held on August 14 based on last August's successful event.

Tourism: Technical Advisor Offerman announced that the 2011 Governor's Fishing Opener will be held in the Grand Rapids area. This could present potential promotional opportunities for the Great River Road and it would be good for MN-MRPC members to become involved in the planning process. Ideas to promote the river and Great River Road could include a wide range of things including canoeing on the river; bicycle rides; or garbage pick up activities. If the Mississippi happens to run through the chosen lake, it would provide a natural tie to the Great River Road.

Transportation: Technical Advisor Zoff reported on the historic wayside restoration projects. Current priorities include the St. Cloud Historical Marker, which will be moved to a new location in partnership with the Department of Natural Resources and St. Cloud State University. Work also continues on the Burns Avenue Overlook in St. Paul, which is on an extended contract and should be completed this summer. Planning and partnering with other agencies is also underway on the Reno Springs wayside, La Crescent wayside and Minnesota Training School walls in Red Wing. The Lake City Concourse project will begin soon and will be one of the largest of the restorations including new stone walks, utility replacements and installation of a rain garden.

Grand Rapids to Brainerd Region: Commissioner Schaubach offered to host the August MN-MRPC meeting in his region, in partnership with Commissioners Frost and Samp. This would be an expanded session on August 26 consisting of the quarterly business meeting along with visits to area points of interest along the Great River Road. Meeting space has been tentatively reserved and the remainder of the agenda will be planned based on what Commission members would like to see. Commissioner Labovitz offered to provide van transportation for 6 – 7 people. Details will be planned and announced during the summer.

Elk River to Hastings Region: Commissioner Labovitz reported on the Urban Wilderness Canoe Adventure program, which recently held its kick-off event for the season. He also reported on an upcoming trip to talk with representatives from the Delaware River area about development of a possible new park. News from Washington - Congresswoman Betty McCollum will now be serving on the Interior and Environmental Subcommittee on Appropriations.

GRR in Canada: Senator Senjem reported on a recent visit to his office by Minnesota's General Consul from Canada. They discussed the Great River Road including its history in Canada and the marker located near Kenora, Ontario.

Management/Marketing RFP for 2011-12

Chairman Johnson reported that the Legislative Coordinating Commission is handling the RFP process for MN-MRPC management and marketing services. The announcement has been published in the State Register, applications are due June 1, and LCC will work with Chairman Johnson on review and selection.

Next Meeting

Thursday, August 26, 2010 • Crossings/Scenic Region • Please set aside the full day

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:10 p.m.



Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota Regional Updates - May 2010

Grand Rapids to Brainerd – Commissioner Schaubach

There is continued progress and more opportunities for promoting and developing amenities for the Mississippi River in our region. Throughout this spring, the communities of the Cuyuna Range have worked on community development opportunities around diversifying recreational tourism in our region. The offerings of the nearby Mississippi River and the development of the master plan of the Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area [CCSRA] are keys to this effort.

As I mentioned in previous reports, the 5000 acre CCSRA master plan calls for a number of integrated, compatible silent sport offerings in the abandoned mine lands of the Cuyuna Iron Range. Paved trail biking / hiking, mountain biking, kayaking / canoeing, trout fishing, birding, nature photography, geocaching, snowmobiling, SCUBA, etc. This CCSRA connects directly to the Mississippi at Riverton, MN. So it is a natural fit as a major amenity and attraction to this section of the headwaters of the Mississippi and has the potential to play an important role in expanding the tourism potential for Minnesota's Mississippi.

There are some major advancements in the development of these tourism attractions taking place.

- Following along the course of the Mississippi, more paved segments of the Cuyuna Lakes State Trail will be constructed this summer and next... some in Brainerd, more on the Cuyuna Range and some in Aitkin. All this will serve as a resource to in time build out the assets of the Mississippi River Trail.
- Two fund raisers for the Cuyuna Lakes Trail are in place. On April 24 the Brainerd Jaycees held the annual Brainerd Lakes Marathon. On Saturday, September 11 the Cuyuna Lakes trails Association will hold the Tour of Cuyuna Bicycle Ride. All proceeds go to continued trail development. Pass the word around if you know people who may have an interest.
- Construction began this week on 22 miles of world class mountain bike trails in the CCSRA. This is a new national model for this sport led by the International Mountain Bike Association and is expected to draw mountain bikers from outside our state.
- The CCSRA is being touted by the diving world as one of the very best places in the upper Midwest for this sport.
- More and more people are kayaking, canoeing the CCSRA mine lakes and the area Mississippi. When we get folks to the CCSRA from outside our state, we find they also want to experience the Mississippi.

As a result of this, the local communities have initiated visioning and planning to transform local tourism to take advantage of these opportunities.

- This spring the Iron Range Resources and the University of Minnesota regional Partnerships funded a number of community visioning sessions [The Cuyuna Visioning Partnership]. These sessions were facilitated by Kent Gustafson and Cynthia Meisner of the U of M Tourism Center. Results demonstrated support for the emergence of the CCSRA and surrounding region as a center for this new approach to tourism. Something that introduces a new generation to the outdoors through new ways to experience the outdoors... using a silent sports approach that encourages fitness... that is family friendly.
- The Cuyuna Range communities were also selected as a project for the Minnesota Design Team. The Minnesota Design Team brings a volunteer group of architects, planners, marketers, landscape architects to help communities. This effort, called PROJECT REVIVE, used citizen input to devise a plan to brand and beautify the towns within the CCSRA... and to transform the local tourism economy this silent sport attractions.
- In both of these citizen-input processes comments about appreciating, preserving and protecting the local Mississippi came out. [We are excited to hear of the grass roots Mississippi River advocacy in the Brainerd community in which Karl is involved.]
- Through this past bonding session, \$1.25 million was approved for infrastructure development of the CCSRA. [Thanks to all our legislators who supported this investment.] The CCSRA remains, at its core,

We have one other significant opportunity that has our attention. The Potlatch Company presently owns two plus miles of Mississippi shoreline between Brainerd and the Cuyuna Range [2000+ acres]. Potlatch may be willing to sell. There is an effort to purchase this to make this parcel a part of the public trust. Price, funds, etc are at issue. If this could be accomplished this quality river asset would be elevated. It would be a significant step in our mission to protect and provide Mississippi access for the public in the years ahead. And this parcel, along with others in the area already acquired, would help elevate our headwaters sections of the Mississippi to epic status... for quality of life of local citizens... and continued tourism development around river attractions... There is a group of citizens, advocates and entities like the Nature Conservancy engaged to promote this and help make it happen.

Hastings to Iowa Border – Commissioner Mulry

Recent Activities

- CapX2020 Advisory Task Force Meetings and Follow Up
- SMTA Meeting, Historic Bluff Country
- Spring Day Conference for Artists and those interested in the Arts, Jon Hassler Theater, Plainview, MN
- Great River Gathering
- Wilderness Inquiry Canoe Paddle
- Native American Tourism Association of WI

National Updates

- Working with WI MRPC and their marketing committee on CAPX2020 and Fish/Wildlife Service Cell Phone Grant. Plan to attend both quarterly meeting and marketing meeting if time allows in my schedule.
- Working with Culture & Heritage Committee issues and helping schedule lots of river interviews with Minnesota folks in July.

Brainerd to Elk River – Commissioner Samp

Our Gap communities are now down to two. On March 15th, Brainerd City Council passed a resolution to prohibit any new billboards along the GRR through town. I worked with Mark Ostergarten, City Planner for some time on this, and Carol and Mark Anderson were very helpful.

Brainerd / Baxter now has an active group planning for revitalization along the Mississippi River through town. The latest Blandin Leadership cohort from Brainerd is playing an active role in this endeavor. They have hired SEH to lead a preliminary visioning process which took place on April 26th. The draft vision statement and some base plans will be revealed on June 14th. I will be attending that meeting, though I missed the April one. I have been keeping the GRR and MRT in front of them at gatherings leading up to the planning meeting. Steve Voss of MnDOT District 3, has attended at least one of the meetings I attended.

The Cities of St. Cloud, Sauk Rapids, and Sartell kicked off the public information gathering phase of their efforts to develop a plan for the Mississippi River frontage through their communities. The kick off meeting was May 20th at the Civic Center in St. Cloud. I signed up to be notified of planning committee meetings for the Tourism Task Force.

I regularly attend the Mississippi River Forums in St. Cloud put on by the NPS and Paul's staff covering various topics (storm water runoff management, value of Green Space etc.). Lots of activity up here in Central MN. We hope you consider having the Aug. meeting up here. John and I (and hopefully Jack) will work hard to provide a pleasant experience.