



**Minnesota Mississippi River Parkway Commission
4th Quarter Meeting
November 18, 2010
State Office Building, St. Paul MN**

MINUTES – Draft

Commissioners Present

Andy Golfis – Member At-Large
Rep. Sheldon Johnson – MN-MRPC Chair
Frank Pafko – Transportation Appointee
John Schaubach – Grand Rapids to Brainerd
Sen. Sandra Pappas
Jack Frost – Itasca to Grand Rapids

Tech Advisors & Staff Present

Greg Hubinger – LCC
Carol Zoff – Transportation
Cynthia Wheeler – Natural Resources

Chris Miller - Staff

Commissioners & Advisors Absent

Robin Kinney – Agriculture Appointee
Rep. Greg Davids
Don Frerichs – Explore MN Tourism Appointee
Paul Labovitz – Elk River to Hastings
Sheronne Mulry – Hastings to Iowa Border
Sen. David Senjem
Andrea Hart-Kajer – Historical Society Appointee
David Kelliher – Historical Society
Cheryl Offerman – Explore MN Tourism

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Johnson at 2:45 p.m. A quorum was not present. Members reviewed the proposed agenda and minutes from August 26, and the Chair proceeded through the agenda for information and discussion.

Commission Business

2011 Financial Status Report: A year-to-date status report listing budget by line item, expenditures to date, and amounts remaining for the 2011 fiscal year was distributed. The report also included balances for federal grants held by the Commission and detail on required local match amounts to complete the grant work. Discussion followed on funding needs for the current year. An invoice will be requested from the National MRPC Office to ensure that 2011 dues are paid soon. Staff time will be needed to do background work for a possible National Scenic Byways Grant application for development of a new Corridor Management Plan (CMP). Input on the process was provided by the group including review of information recently gathered at the MRPC Annual Meeting regarding the GRR five and ten years from now; Mn/DOT's current database from MRT projects that could also be used for CMP development; review and use of information available in the most recent CMP; and development of a possible ad hoc work group. Supplies of Minnesota Great River Road marketing materials for shipment to local visitor centers, state parks, interpretive centers, etc. have been depleted. There was discussion about a reprint of the current map/travel planner. Minimal updating would be required. General consensus was to survey our list of sites regarding desired quantity and then plan for a reprint to last up to two years; and also to proceed with background work for a possible National Scenic Byways Grant/Corridor Management Plan. Staff was asked to prepare a budget plan for the remainder of the fiscal year.

Projections for FY '12 and Beyond: The Commission's operating budget could be reduced due to state budget constraints, and securing local match for any federal grant applications could also be very difficult. Other options to seek matching funds were discussed including Legacy Funds, LCMR, and contributions from partner state agencies. Advance payment of National MRPC dues was noted as an option to provide increased flexibility with operating funds for necessary federal grant match. A suggestion was made to prepare for grant applications but submit later as matching funds are secured. It was also noted that there is a window of time for funded National Scenic Byway projects to begin, which could provide options to begin in a fiscal year when matching funds would more likely be available.

The current sunset date listed in statute for the MN-MRPC is June 30, 2012. Planning should begin during the upcoming legislative session to extend that date and allow for continued appropriation of state operating funds.

Commission Member Vacancy: Commissioner Golfis announced that he will be leaving the MN-MRPC after many years of service. Today will be his last official meeting. Chairman Johnson thanked

Commissioner Golfis for his dedication and service to the MN-MRPC and National MRPC, and announced that recognition will take place at the 2011 First Quarter Meeting.

National MRPC Updates

Report from 2010 Annual Meeting: The MN-MRPC had seven representatives in attendance at the meeting held in La Crosse. Technical Advisor Zoff reported that there was representation from all ten states, providing good information on activities and issues along the full length of the Great River Road. A brainstorming session on the future of the Great River Road identified ideas on where things should be five and ten years into the future. A copy of the information will be forwarded to staff, and then sent out to the Commission. Commissioner Golfis noted the milestone of all ten states being current on dues and having state commissions operational. Commissioner Pappas noted that she did not attend due to a conflict with Rosh Hashana and requested that this conflict be considered in future scheduling.

State MRPC Travel Updates and Upcoming Events

Commissioner Pafko and others attended the Minnesota Scenic Byways Workshop, hosted by the Gunflint Trail Scenic Byway. The Chik Wauk Museum, a restoration project utilizing National Scenic Byway funds, was featured. The 2011 Explore Minnesota Tourism Conference will be held January 25-26 in Nisswa. Commission members were asked to notify the MN-MRPC Office if interested in attending.

Old Business

CapX2020 Updates: Technical Advisor Zoff, Commissioner Frost and Commissioner Golfis reported. A route has been selected for the Bemidji-Grand Rapids transmission line. Mn/DOT and MN-MRPC representatives agree that the chosen route is the best available option to reduce impact to the Great River Road. There is concern over herbicides that will be needed in the right-of-way area, and negative impact to desired vegetation. Commissioner Frost was a member of the local citizen advisory group and participated in meetings, tours and hearings. He reported that good efforts were made in addressing concerns and placing the route accordingly. The Monticello – St. Cloud project is moving forward without implementation of the MN-MRPC's full mitigation recommendations. The position is that impact within the transmission line right-of-way will be mitigated, fulfilling requirements of the permit. Earlier involvement in the process may have resulted in a different outcome. The Environmental Impact Statement is currently in development for the Hampton – La Crosse project. A meeting with the permit manager will be requested to ensure that Great River Road concerns are included. Advisor Zoff discussed efforts to gather information on Mn/DOT investments along the Great River Road in the Bluffs Region including items such as scenic easements and waysides. Other partner agencies may also be asked for this information, which can then be mapped to demonstrate specific intrinsic qualities of the byway for protection. At the recent Annual Meeting, the National MRPC Board discussed CapX 2020 implications to the Minnesota and Wisconsin Great River Road. The board approved a resolution to request additional research on the potential to two National Scenic Byways prior to any finalization of actual routes. A draft is pending.

Unpaved Section of GRR in Aitkin County: Commissioner Golfis reported on his conversation with John Welle, Aitkin County Engineer, regarding three unpaved segments of the Great River Road. These are the last unpaved sections on the entire national route. The first segment has been paved, the second is in the design phase, and the third (7 miles in length) has funding in the transportation bill but no definite plans for completion. Commissioner Golfis noted the importance of completing these projects since they are the only unpaved sections in all ten Mississippi River states.

Historic Roadside Property Ribbon Cutting Event: Chairman Johnson shared information on the ribbon cutting held at the Lake City Concourse on October 21. He attended along with Commissioners Mulry and Labovitz, and Technical Advisor Zoff. The event showcased the recently completed restoration project, along with providing an overview of all restorations occurring up and down the river. Chairman Johnson noted the tremendous job that was done on the Lake City restoration and how it will serve travelers for years to come. The event was well received by local and regional officials.

2011 National Scenic Byways Conference, Aug 21 – 24, 2011 – Minneapolis

MN-MRPC Attendance: Since the conference will be held in Minneapolis, it offers MN-MRPC members the opportunity to participate in a national level event without out-of-state travel. All members were asked to notify the MN-MRPC Office if interested in attending. The current Federal Seed Grant could be used to pay for registrations, but travel funds would need to come from the 2011-12 budget.

Nominations for National Scenic Byways Awards: Discussion took place on the possibility of application for a National Scenic Byway Award in the "historic" category as well as a 2011 FHWA National Environmental Excellence Award. The entire Minnesota Great River Road Historic Roadside Property Restoration Project could be highlighted, or certain specific sites could be featured. Consensus was to proceed with award applications for the entire statewide project.

Presentation Proposals: Presentation proposals for the National Scenic Byways Conference are due December 17. Mobile workshops featuring local sites will also be developed soon. Ideas discussed included a canoe trip on the river in conjunction with MNRRA/Urban Wilderness Canoe Area/Wilderness Inquiry; bike trip along the MRT; and bus tour down Highway 61.

Work Group Updates

Meetings or conference calls of the Organization and Marketing Work Groups are needed to address work plan items and grant projects. Work Group chairs will be contacted regarding dates.

Agency and Regional Updates

Itasca to Grand Rapids: Commissioner Frost referred the group to his written report (attached) and also mentioned activities of the Mississippi Headwaters Board, which he currently chairs. A new river book is being developed. Also in the region, work is taking place on the County Roads 33 and 39 sections of the Great River Road.

Grand Rapids to Brainerd: Commissioners Schaubach and Frost invited all MN-MRPC members to a meeting on December 9 from 8:30 to 3:30 at the Northland Arboretum in Baxter. "Mississippi River Headwaters: Sharing Information on Habitat, Water Quality, Recreation, and Community Development" will involve multiple organizations and communities reaching from the Headwaters to St. Cloud area. It is designed to be a brainstorming session to identify common concerns and related initiatives. Discussion could be useful as development of a Great River Road Corridor Management Plan is considered.

Natural Resources: Technical Advisor Wheeler referred to the attached report and highlighted information related to the Whitewater Kayak Park; designation of the Upper Mississippi River floodplain wetlands as a "Wetland of International Importance;" and Mississippi River Renaissance initiative in Central Minnesota. She also distributed information on the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area Program and upcoming rulemaking.

Transportation: Technical Advisor Zoff reported on progress of the historic roadside restoration project. The Camp Commander has requested a ribbon cutting to showcase the recently restored Camp Ripley Walls. Memorial Day 2011 has been set as the tentative date. The Burns Avenue Overlook project is in final stages of completion. Plans to address security concerns by locking the site overnight are being discussed with local partners. It was suggested that a neighborhood event be scheduled in spring. Work on the interpretive panel project is continuing. Final proofs of the first two signs were shared with Regional Commissioners.

Next Meeting

2011 meeting dates have not yet been determined. Dates will follow a similar pattern as 2010 meetings. More information will be forwarded as it becomes available.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:05 p.m.



Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota Regional Updates - November 2010

Lake Itasca to Grand Rapids – Commissioner Jack Frost

It has been a busy fall with the long campaign season finally over. I am pleased to report that I was re-elected to another term as Beltrami County commissioner by a margin of 66% to 33% over my opponent. Now, back to work on a full time basis....

The Mississippi Headwaters Board has kept me, as chair, very busy. The MHB, after two stakeholder group visioning sessions, has elected to embark on a revitalization and rebranding initiative. We have engaged the services of Chip Borkenhagen, Publisher of Lake Country Journal, to facilitate this initiative. After three project review committee meetings, we have developed a new logo, commenced a new incarnation of the MHB website and plan to publish a new printing of the MHB River Book. Other projects include: a revitalized, fully accredited River Watch Program, a potential working relationship with the Nature Conservancy, and a new power point presentation for funding at the state legislature.

I attended the Heartland Tourism Association annual meeting at Bemidji's new Sanford Regional Event Center on October 21st. MRPC was mentioned in my introductory remarks. John Edman of the Minnesota Office of Tourism was the keynote speaker on "Opportunities in the New Normal - Changing Trends and Impacts to MN Tourism."

I have been asked to attend and make a short presentation on the MHB at the first meeting of the Upper Mississippi Stake Holders meeting in Baxter on December 9th. The theme is "Sharing a Mississippi River Vision."



Mississippi River Parkway Commission of Minnesota Regional Updates - November 2010

Department of Natural Resources – Cynthia Wheeler, Technical Advisor

Mississippi Whitewater Park Project

Two alternative designs for a whitewater park on the Mississippi River, downriver from the Stone Arch Bridge, were presented at an interim design meeting on August 25, 2010, by the design consultants. The first design is a loop arrangement which shortens the return to start and finish, includes a conveyor system, and maintains the dredge spoils site on site. The second design is a linear arrangement that displaces the dredge spoils and is more operationally challenging. At the request of the Mississippi Whitewater Park Development Corporation, the DNR has asked the Corps of Engineers to develop a third alternative, one that starts the whitewater park further upstream, providing greater visibility of the whitewater course from the Stone Arch bridge.

Upper Mississippi River Floodplain Wetlands – Wetland of International Importance

The multi-jurisdictional Upper Mississippi River floodplain wetlands were designated as a "Wetland of International Importance." This area is the 27th U.S. wetland designated under the Convention on Wetlands. This designation includes more than 300,000 acres of federal and state lands and water of the Upper Mississippi River floodplain from near Wabasha, Minn., to north of Rock Island, Ill.

Mississippi River Critical Area Rule Making

As directed by the legislature, DNR is in the process of developing new rules for development along the Mississippi River's 72 mile corridor from the city of Ramsey to southeastern Dakota County. See handout for process and status.

Mississippi River Renaissance

An on-going effort to improve protection of and local coordination around the 27 mile reach of the Mississippi River between Benton and Stearns Counties. A coordinator was hired by the Stearns County SWCD through a grant from the McKnight Foundation. Accomplishments include:

- Collaboratively developed a vision statement (11-09) and was adopted by resolution in 10 of the 11 jurisdictions (townships, cities and counties) in addition to the two SWCDs.
- Beginning last summer, partnered with Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials (NEMO) to carry out three phase educational workshop series (two classroom and one 'on the ground') specifically for local elected officials; identifying issues and highlighting policies, practices and procedures to protect the river. Final workshop to be held November 29th.
- The last two summers, partnered with the Initiative Foundation and local philanthropic groups to get local elected officials "on" the Mississippi River in three different workshops: Voyageurs' canoes (Wilderness Inquiries) and two pontoon workshops. This

brought a better understanding of the Mississippi River to approximately 90 local elected officials and prominent local figures.

- Collectively part of a movement that raised the profile of the Mississippi River in Central Minnesota. Significant events include:
 - Central Minnesota Community Foundation sponsored a trip to Dubuque, Iowa specifically to see their communities' relationship to the Mississippi.
 - The Cities of St. Cloud, Sartell and Sauk Rapids have initiated (and are nearing completion on) a 'St. Cloud Urban Area Mississippi River Corridor Plan'.
- Next phase is an approved LCCMR proposal to coordinate land use policy along the river including the adoption of a conservation overlay district in the non-metro areas of the reach as well as developing a landowner registry.