



Iowa
Mississippi River Parkway Commission

2023-2024 Annual Report
September 2024

MARTIN L. GRABER, Chair
Iowa Mississippi River Parkway Commission





2023-2024

Iowa Mississippi River Parkway Commission

Explore Iowa's Great River Road

CONTENTS

Vacant
Allamakee County

Roger Thomas
Clayton County

Vacant
Dubuque County

Paula Mayer, Treasurer
Jackson County

Vacant
Clinton County

Ann Geiger, Secretary
Scott County

Paul Carroll
Muscatine County

Katie Hammond
Louisa County

Lisa Walsh, Vice Chair
Des Moines County

Martin Graber, Chair
Lee County

Mission Statement 3

Vision Statement 3

Goals and Objectives 4

Iowa MRPC Commission Structure 5

Commissioners' General Activities 5

Iowa MRPC Budget 6

Economic Impact..... 6

Budget..... 7

Advocating Activities 8

Marketing..... 8

Interpretive Centers..... 8

Travel Guide 9

The Road 10

Young Museum and Interpretive Centers 11

ADDENDUM

Commissioners and Technical Members 12

Minutes 14

MISSION STATEMENT

The Iowa Mississippi River Parkway Commission (IAMRPC) was organized to:

- Preserve, promote, and enhance the scenic, historic, natural, archaeological, cultural, and recreation resources of the National Scenic Byway (NSB)/Iowa Great River Road (GRR) and the Iowa Mississippi River Valley.
- Foster economic growth of the Mississippi River corridor.
- Develop the National Scenic Byway/Great River Road.

ALL AMERICAN ROAD

Established in 1991, the National Scenic Byways Program recognizes roadways with notable scenic, historic, cultural, natural, recreational, and archaeological qualities. Scenic America, a national environmental nonprofit that preserves and enhances the visual character and scenic beauty of America, led the charge to revitalize and restore funding for the program.

This is a national designation and joins such roads as the Appalachian Trail and the California Scenic Highway. In addition to being a major task and accomplishment to achieve this status, this designation also gives the Road an opportunity for additional funding.

VISION

The Iowa Great River Road will sustain rewarding lifelong experiences for Iowans and visitors from around the world through the support of a cooperative network of partners and stakeholder, each of which invest in and benefit from the conservation, development, promotion, interpretation, and management of the diverse intrinsic resources of the Iowa Mississippi River Valley.

(Adopted December 15, 2014).

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- Assist in coordinating the increase of investment and awareness of the National Scenic Byway/Iowa Great River Road and its amenities with roadside parks, scenic overlooks, educational experiences and opportunities and historic information.
- Continue the identification, documentation, and protection of the intrinsic resources of the Great River Road.
- Expand the local citizen awareness of the resources and importance of the Great River Road in Iowa and the adjoining states.
- Provide new travel experiences through effective interpretation and promotion of the Great River Road.
- Increase information services to residents and organizations along the Great River Road.
- Identify economic development opportunities based on the sensitive use of the Road's intrinsic resources.
- Sustain existing alliances with other organizations that are interested in the future of the Great River Road and develop new partnerships where needed.
- Identify volunteer opportunities for individuals and organizations along the Great River Road.
- Assist in coordinating the increase of investment and awareness of the Great River Road and its resources with development of a variety of amenities and delivery of programs for public awareness, interpretation, and promotion.
- Increase the awareness for Great River Road stakeholders of availability of public and private funding for resource conservation, transportation enhancement, interpretation, and promotion.
- Develop communication opportunities to tell the stories of the National Scenic Byway/Great River Road.
Arrange community involvement meetings and workshops pertaining to a variety of Great River Road related topics...
Advocate for the Great River Road Interpretative Centers.
- Advocate for the Great River Road research, planning, and development studies.
Advocate for transportation related projects in the Great River Road Corridor that incorporate the principles of context sensitive design.
- Advocate for the use of sustainable design principles such as L.E.E.D. (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), native plant community restoration, multi-functional streets, etc.
- Conserve, develop, promote, and interpret, and manage the Iowa Great River Road.
(Adopted December 15, 2014).

A major factor in achieving these goals and objectives is partnering with area and national groups and associations that have similar goals and interests. By networking with other organizations, we can best utilize all our assets, including financial, contacts, and personnel.

IOWA MRPC STRUCTURE

The Iowa Commission consists of ten commissioners appointed by the Governor of Iowa representing the ten counties that border the Mississippi River. The commission by Iowa statute is gender and politically balanced. In addition, there are five technical members representing: Iowa Department of Transportation, Department of Economic Development, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Iowa Office of Tourism, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Iowa Commissioners' General Activities

The Iowa Chair and /or his proxy participated in all National MRPC Board meetings and Executive Board meetings, as well as the Annual Meeting. The 2023 semi-annual meeting was conducted by zoom and the annual meeting was held in September at Memphis, Tennessee. The majority of Iowa Commissioners also participated in the National MRPC meetings.

Commissioners visit the eighteen Interpretive Centers and focus particularly on their respective Centers within their individual counties and provide materials for distribution and review the activities of each center and address any concerns.

Commissioners have been telling the Great River Road story in their individual counties. In addition, many commissioners meet with their elected officials and local citizens in addition to a formal annual meeting.

The Commission met October 23, 2023 at the Des Moines County Heritage Museum, Burlington, Iowa; January 26, 2024, at the Hurstville Interpretive Center; Maquoketa, Iowa; April 12, 2024, at the Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium, Dubuque, Iowa; June 14, 2024 at the Muscatine History and Industry Center (Button Museum) in Muscatine, Iowa. There were called meetings by phone on October 30, 2023 and March 1, 2024. Minutes of these meetings are included as a part of this report.

For additional information or current activities see our Iowa Great River Road Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/IowaGreatRiverRoad>).

Economic Impact of tourism dollars in millions spent in Eastern Iowa in comparison with next county west and Loess Hills Byway on western edge of state

Great River Road	Millions	Next County West		Loess Hills	
Allamakee	30.2M	Winneshiek	42.8M	Plymouth	27.0M
Clayton	26.3M	Fayette	17.5M	Woodbury	257.0M
Dubuque	296.1M	Delaware	18.7M	Monona	11.4M
Jackson	25.1M	Jones	16.4M	Harrison	11.9M
Clinton	69.5M	Cedar	13.6M	Pottawattamie	329.6M
Scott	513.3M	Cedar	13.6M	Mills	6.3M
Muscatine	55.4M	Washington	32.8M	Fremont	16.0M
Louisa	11.7M	Washington	32.8M		
Des Moines	115.3M	Henry	23.2M		
Lee	52.6M	Van Buren	7.6M		
Annual Total					
2022	1195.5M		172.6M		647.3M

Comparison of counties along Great River Road compared to next county west

Portion of Johnson County next to Muscatine County so small the impact was not noted

The Loess Hills Byway does not extend the length of the Great River Road

IOWA MRPC BUDGET

The FY-2024 budget for the Iowa MRPC was approved by the Iowa DOT for \$40,000.00. The budget includes 2024 National MRPC dues, Iowa Byways Foundation Membership, and Marketing expenses. The semi-annual meeting was held as a virtual meeting and the annual meeting was held in Memphis, Tennessee.

Fiscal Year Budget

Item	Description	Iowa DOT	Amount	Balance
1	MRPC Annual Dues	\$15,000	\$15,00.00	0.00
2	Annual Meeting	\$6,550.00	\$2,219.00	\$830.81
3	Administration	\$300.00	\$300.00	0.00
4	Travel/meals in-state	\$400.00	623.00	(\$223.00)
5	Iowa Byways Foundation	\$250.00	\$250.00	0.00
6	Marketing	\$21,000.00	\$20,058.50	\$941.50
Total		\$40,000	\$37,900.69	\$2,099.31

ADVOCATING ACTIVITIES

Marketing

The Commission is continuing to focus on raising awareness of the Road and to catch the attention in different ways than have been previously used.

Because the of radio ads, which are regionally crafted, from six (6) weeks to eight (8) weeks, and the addition of billboards. semi-annual meeting was cancelled as an in person meeting and rescheduled as a virtual meeting the travel dollars budgeted were reallocated to better promote the Great River Road. As a result of the impact this would have on travel along the Mississippi, the Commission expanded its previously discussed focus on marketing. One of the changes which eventually had the biggest impact was the increase There were billboards on the east coast, center, and west coast of Iowa. This had a positive result with tourists now taking trips closer to home. The ads have resulted in a large increase in on-line traffic, which has shown longer times spent than is usual for on-line visitors. The national office is again sponsoring on-road activities.

Passports are still available at the Interpretive Centers for visitors to take and focus on visiting centers of which they may not have been aware. The Commission distributed 2,000 of them in the spring of 2023. They have been shown to very popular with visitors.

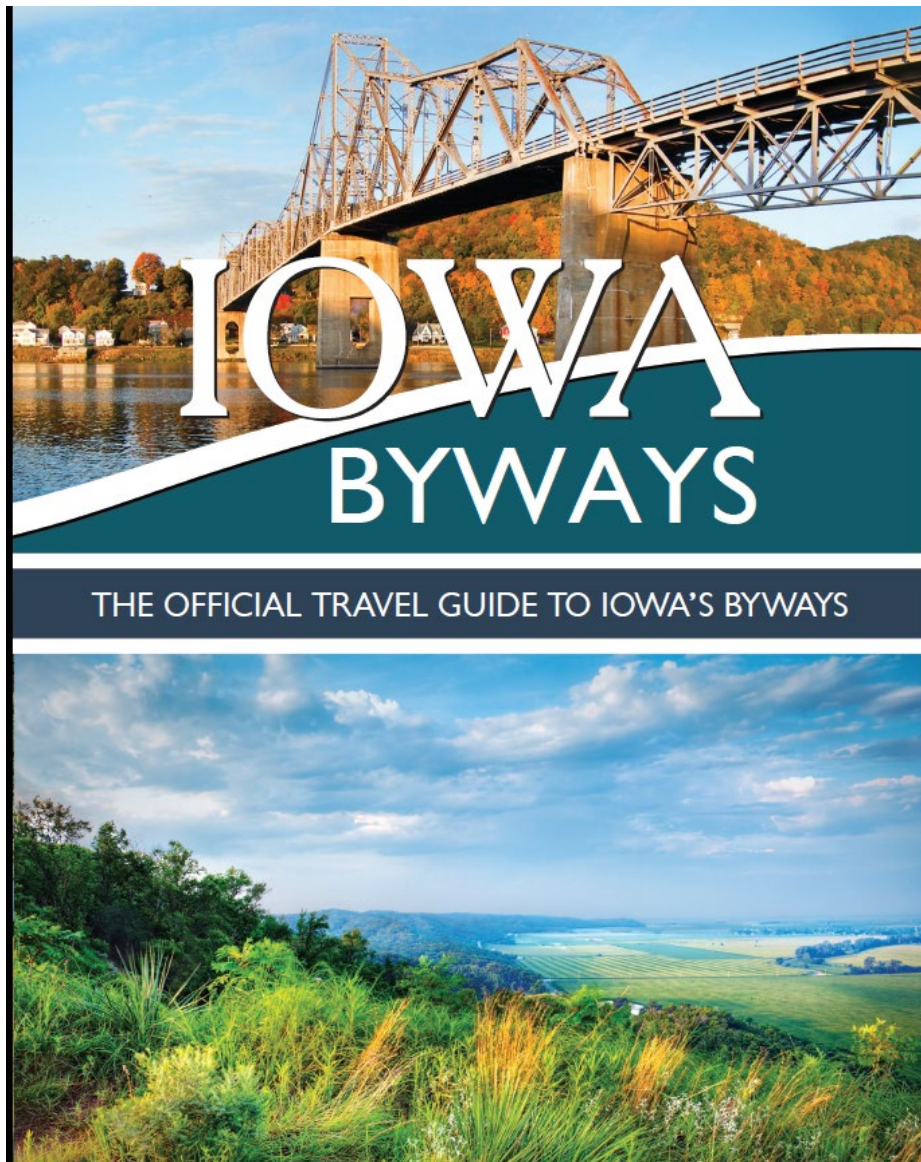
Great River Road Interpretive Centers

Iowa has 18 Interpretive Centers (ICenters), which is more than any other state. Each Center is supplied with Great River Road tear sheets, small passports, Iowa Byways Travel Guide, and a banner. The banners have QR Codes to be cell phone friendly and seem to elicit a positive response. Each Interpretive Center is encouraged to list their center and weekly activities on the Iowa Tourism website – <https://www.traveliowa.com/getinspired/iowa-5-great-river-road/23/> . The Interpretive Centers are also encouraged to list events on experiencemississippiriver.com.



Iowa Byways Travel Guide

The Iowa MRPC in cooperation with Iowa's other designated byways and the Iowa Department of Transportation is featured in the high-quality travel guide showcasing the Iowa Great River Road in four pages and the other ten designated Iowa scenic byways. This visitor friendly guide invites travelers to extend their Iowa visits and experience more of Iowa's nearby attractions that complement the GRR experience. The guide is free and can be viewed and ordered at www.iowasbyway.org. Commission members have worked hard to distribute this guide to the welcome and interpretative centers, CVB'S and other tourist attractions in their counties.



THE ROAD

BURLINGTON

In Burlington's bluff top Crapo Park, the bridge spanning Cascade Ravine has been closed to motor and pedestrian traffic. The bridge built in 1896 connects downtown Burlington with Crapo Park via South Main Street and is the recognized route for the Iowa Great River Road. It is the oldest Bridge in Iowa and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is now showing its age. Burlington stopped letting vehicles travel across Cascade Bridge in 2008, and it was closed in 2021 totally for walkers and well as bikes. A preliminary study has been completed and the City of Burlington has this on their list of bridges to be replaced.

Vice Chair, Lisa Walsh, Des Moines County Commissioner, has played an active part in acquiring funding, and Graber, MRPC Chair, has attended. via telephone.

The Iowa Department of Transportation has provided \$1 million from its city bridge fund.

Walsh secured \$1,071,780 from National Scenic Byways Program / Federal Highway Administration

And not confirmed, but probable: \$6 million from U.S. House Community Development Program according to Iowa First Congressional District Representative Mariannette Miller-Meeks.

That makes a total of \$8,071,780 to replace the bridge and open that section of the road again

Bellevue

This past year the Commission continues to try to get the information regarding the development of the Great River Road copies and put in a more secure, temperature-controlled environment. In this house is the paperwork for the development of the Great River Road as a national byway. The legal documents are signed by the governors of the states at the time it was approved by Congress in 1938. Also included are maps and letters sent back and forth to Washington D.C. Within a year the precursor of what is now the Mississippi River Parkway Commission was formed and the documents for that are also included.

MONTROSE

The Road through Montrose was damaged again. A few years ago it was unavailable for several years, but it has been repaired and is open again. Chair Graber has been involved in researching and providing a long term solution to this issue versus a quick fix with the City of Montrose and County supervisors.

Iowa Interpretive Centers

This past year there have been several of the Interpretive Centers which have new directors. Those are: Driftless Area Education & Visitors Center, Sawmill Museum, Buffalo Bill Museum & River Pilots Pier, and Toolesboro Mounds & Museum.

Driftless Area Education & Visitor Center
Lansing, Iowa

Sawmill Museum
Clinton, Iowa

Effigy Mounds National Monument
Harpers Ferry, Iowa

Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center
Camanche, Iowa

Motor Mill Historic Site
Elkader, Iowa

Buffalo Bill Museum & River Pilots Pier
LeClaire, Iowa

Guttenberg Fish Hatchery
Guttenberg, Iowa

Putnam Museum of History &
Natural Science
Davenport, Iowa

National Mississippi River Museum and
Aquarium & National Rivers Hall of Fame
Dubuque, Iowa

Nahant Marsh Education Center
Davenport, Iowa

E.B. Lyons Interpretive Center/Mines of
Spain Recreation Area

Pine Creek Grist Mill
Muscatine, Iowa

Hurstville Interpretive Center
Maquoketa, Iowa

Toolesboro Mounds & Museum
Wapello, Iowa

Heritage Center Museum
Burlington, Iowa

Old Fort Madison
Fort. Madison, Iowa

National Pearl Button Museum
Muscatine, Iowa

George M. Verity Riverboat Museum
Keokuk, Iowa

As of the date of this report Iowa is on track to have its 19th Interpretive Center approved. The Muscatine County Conservation's Environmental Learning Center at Discovery Park at Muscatine has been reviewed by the Heritage and Culture Committee and has been recommended to be approved at the national meeting in Winona, Minnesota in September.

ADDENDUM

Commission

COMMISSIONERS	COMMITTEES	CONTACT INFORMATION	TERM
ALLAMAKEE COUNTY Vacant			
CLAYTON COUNTY Roger Thomas 17650 Domino Rd Elkader, IA 52043		rrthomas@alpinecom.net PH: 563-245-1084 Cell: 563-3780-8193	06/30/2025
CLINTON COUNTY Vacant			
DES MOINES COUNTY Lisa T. Walsh, Vice-President Nat'l Transportation 6172 Nikonha Plc Burlington, IA 52601		lwalsh6172@gmail.com Ph: 319.752.0912 Cell: 319.850.1950	06/30/2027
DUBUQUE COUNTY Vacant			
JACKSON COUNTY Paula L Mayer, Treasurer 58414 50th St Sabula, IA 52070	Nat'l Marketing	iowamrpcpaulamayer@gmail.com Cell: 563.357.6292	06/30/2027
LEE COUNTY Martin L. Graber, Chair 2163 North Fork Dr Fort Madison, IA 52627	Nat'l Culture & Heritage	col_graber@yahoo.com Ph: 319.372.1896 (work) Cell: 319.470.5522	06/30/2027
LOUISA COUNTY Katherine Hammond 12635 County Rd Ste 101 Wapello, IA 52653		katie.hammond75@gmail.com 563-260-4764	06/30/2025
MUSCATINE COUNTY Paul Carroll, Nat'l Environment, Recreation and Agriculture (ERA) 504 Chestnut Muscatine, IA 52761		paulcarroll@machlink.com Ph: 563.299.5474	06/30/2025
SCOTT COUNTY Ann Geiger, Secretary 226 N. River Dr, Box 226 Princeton, IA 52768	Nat'l Culture & Heritage	geiger226@gmail.com Ph: 563-508-3945	06/30/2025

MRPC TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Iowa Department of Transportation

Emily Whaley
Iowa DOT, Systems Planning
800 Lincoln Way
Ames, IA 50010

Program Manager

Emily.Whaley@iowadot.us
Ph: 515.239.1629

Department of Natural Resources

Margo Underwood
609 S Shore Dr
Clear Lake, IA 50428

Nat'l Enviro, Rec & Ag

Margo.Underwood@dnr.iowa.gov
Ph: 641.420.3896

Department of Natural Resources

Randy Schultz

Parks

Randy.Schultz@dnr.iowa.gov

Economic Development Authority

Lora Friest
East Grand Office Park
200 E Grand Ave
Des Moines, IA 50309

Iowa MRPC Advisory Nat'l Marketing

Lorafriest@iowaEDA.com
Ph: 515.725.3090

US Army Corps of Engineers

Ron Deiss
Clock Tower Bldg, Box 2003
Rock Island, IL 60204

Nat'l Enviro, Rec

ronald.w.deiss@usace.army.mil
Ph: 309.794.5185

Iowa DOT Office of Systems Planning

Deb Arp

Policy and Agency Support Grant Team Leader

debra.arp@iowadot.us
Ph: 515.239.1681

Garret Pedersen
Iowa DOT

Office Director

garret.pedersen@iowadot.us
Ph: 515.239.1027

Peggy Riecken

Secretary/Claims

peggy.riecken@iowadot.us
Ph: 515.239.1664

National MRPC

Suzanne Thiede-Branet
222 State St, Ste 400
Madison, WI 53703
Lyn Pilch
222 State St, Ste 400

Consultant Leadership Executive Director

MPRC@pilchbarnet.cm
susanne@pilchbarnet.com

Marketing + Mississippi River Country

lyn@pilchbarnet.com

2023-2024 Iowa MRPC Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the Iowa Mississippi River Parkway Commission are always public record. Public notices and meeting minutes are also posted here:

http://www.iowadot.gov/iowasbyways/mississippi_river.htm



Iowa Mississippi River Parkway Commission
Meeting, 10:00 a.m. June 23, 2023
Driftless Area Education and Visitors Center
1944 Columbus Rd, Lansing Iowa
Phone: 563-538-0401

Meeting called to order by Vice-Chair, Lisa Walsh, Katie Hammond, Roger Thomas, Jane Regan, Jim Janett, Leslie Weber, Ann Geiger

Absent: Chair Martin Graber, Paula Mayer, Paul Carroll

Others: Emily Whaley, IA DOT; Jane Hassett, Susan Snow, Effigy Mounds, Lora Friest, EDA

Hammond moved to approve the March 2023 minutes. Janett seconded the motion and it carried.

The Commission reviewed the final annual expenditures. The radio bills were slightly over budget. Regan reviewed the radio bills and said the ads were shut down between June 12th and 13th. She estimated the cost and said IHeart is a corporation out of Chicago and they bill monthly. After a lengthy discussion, Walsh requested a monthly billing report. Whaley said sometimes there are no changes month to month, and Walsh said she still wanted a monthly report sent to the secretary and treasurer to be forwarded to the rest of the commission. Whaley will send. Hammond moved to approve the upcoming radio bills. Webster seconded motion and it carried.

After discussion the Commission moved to approve the bill for River Travel. Motion to approve payment by Janett, seconded by Thomas and the motion carried.

Lora Friest, IDEA 23/24 gave a brief outlook on grant opportunities she thought would be good for the MRPC.

Co-op marketing: It is a new and current tactic; increase expenditures 5% instate annually and 65% increase for out of state expenditures. Stats focus around Iowa for people in 20's and 30's. Idea to reduce local partners. First come, first serve. Highly competitive.

Iowa Tourism Grant due August 20/80 match. Need - a new bid from River Travel. Need 1099 and impact statement.

Rural Scale-Up Grant – Liesel Seabert, IDEA– Someone did this and we want to do it too. Requires a 20% match.

Geiger said she has had requests from local tourism centers regarding the tear sheets. She said it was two years since they were printed at a cost of approximately \$1,800. She said she spoke with Graber and he suggested inquiring with the local tourism centers to see if they would like some and to add them to the printing list at our cost. She reminded the commission they were printed out of our budget for the ICenters so any extras would have to be paid for by the local tourism bureaus. The Commission suggested asking the local tourism offices and getting bids.

National committee appointments and Reports

Marketing Committee No report

Transportation - No report

Environment Recreation and Agriculture – No report

Heritage and Culture – Janett said there were two applications for new ICenters and both were denied.

There was no Chairman's Report.

The Commission presented a statue to Janett upon his retirement from the Iowa Department of Conservation after 32 years. Regan said Janett was instrumental in getting the Driftless Center built, and as the first and only director since its opening, has been instrumental in its success.

Driftless Center has a new director, Ross Geerdes. Janett said he skipped some steps because the previous employee in line for the position took a position outside the area. He said they have lots of school visits which include many from Wisconsin and Minnesota. There are 13-14,000 visitors per year. Attendance is a bit down.

Effigy Mounds is short staffed this winter, and new lead for interpretation. McGregor Discovery Center – Brandi Crozier Biggest project with Corps Fish and Wildlife Service and Two WI DNRs stabilizing part of the park. Some of the mounds are at risk. They are working for better outreach. The Commission was glad to hear that, because it has been difficult to work with the Mounds in the past

Clinton –Camanche Eco Center artist report. Wildness by Gabi Torrez. Did with Conversation Commission and is going to be prepared over the winter and will do silk panels and they will be installed 2024. Matt Parbs is no longer director of Sawmill and working with the economic development office in Clinton. Lisa Mussmann is the new director of the museum.

Harpers Ferry Area Heritage Society and the Martelle Heritage Park One Room Country School and Museum project. They were given an old one-room school and have heritage items which need to be archived and saved for the future and have a 100-year land lease. The group has raised approximately \$150,000 and would like to break ground next year.

The group requested a letter of support. Motion to write a letter of support for the project by Geiger. It was seconded by Webster and the motion carried

McGregor Discovery Center – Brandi Crozier, and Mel Wild. Working with the museum, Jeffery Westfall was interested in helping financially will provide up to \$5m. Working on development plans with RDG from Des Moines. Motion for letter of support from Janett and second by Thomas. Motion carried.

Burlington received a \$1M Scenic America Grant to help with the Cascade Bridge project. Walsh would like to have some sort of public recognition for the project by the Commission.

The Commission was reminded of the national meeting on September 20-22 in Alton Illinois. Commissioners going to annual meeting: Graber and wife; Webster; Janett and wife; Mayer and family; and Geiger.

Next meeting set for October 13, 2023 tentatively in Muscatine.



**Iowa Mississippi River Parkway Commission
Meeting, 10:00 a.m. October 13, 2023
Des Moines County Heritage Center Museum
501 North 4th Street, Burlington, Iowa**

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Martin Graber with Lisa Walsh, Katie Hammond, Lesley Webster, Paula Mayer, Roger Thomas, Jane Regan, and Ann Geiger

Others Present: Emily Whaley, Iowa DOT; Anne Carroll, and Colton Overton, Heritage Center Director

Absent: Paul Carroll and Jim Janett

Overton gave a brief report on the activities of the Heritage Center. He made the Commission aware of the Phelps House, located about two blocks from the Museum, which is open for tours and has the original furniture and equipment from the time it was built which is quite unusual. Regarding the cabin at Crapo Park they have found difficulty with access because of the closure of the Crescent Bridge.

On motion by Walsh with a second by Thomas, the June 23, 2023 minutes were approved with correction of the name Gabby to Gabi by Webster.

On motion by and seconded by Hammond the budget and treasurer's report were approved with a balance of \$32,850.81.

Budget discussion

Reviewing current expenditures Graber wants to send the entire \$15K for national membership.

Motion by Hammond to reallocate \$7,500 back to the budget and pay \$15,00 to National Office for 2023 dues was seconded by Webster and motion carried.

Need to replace new signs for \$278 each from the National Office to replace two in Keokuk County which were destroyed by a storm. Will not have delivered.

Musicians Pro Shop for sound equipment for \$265.00 for press conference.

Also \$190 for flyers and Dimensional Graphics for \$190 for flyers and table banners.

Because the items above were not previously published, they will be addressed at a called meeting on October 30, 2023. They will be approved at that time, as well as holding election of officers.

Geiger said she had been contacted by some of the local tourism bureaus about acquiring the tear sheets. She explained they were funded for the ICenters. She asked if the Commission would see if any of the ICenters need new ones, because they were printed two years ago. If new tear sheets need to be ordered, she suggested contacting the tourism offices to see if they would like to order them at the same time to get a rate. Webster said her office can always use more material.

National committee reports

Marketing Committee None

Transportation Graber said there was discussion about the electric chargers. Also discussed the use of the logo from the MRT, because they were in court because of money issues.

Environment Recreation and Agriculture Looking to move \$500 to Transportation to help with pursuit of MRT logo, Also looking for more advisors.

Heritage and Culture Discussed reviewing the applications and parameters. Found the mailed applications were not the same as the ones online.

Chairman's report

Discussion of possible elimination of commission. Graber addressed the state's potential elimination of the Parkway Commission. He asked if any of the members had been contacted regarding the issue, and the documents say members will be contacted. None of the members had spoken to the committee. Martin said that was not what the commission report called for. Whaley said the DOT responded. She was asked why the document said we were served by 4 full-time employees of the DOT. She identified the individuals listed. She did not differentiate whether they were full-time DOT employees and the amount of

time spent on the Commission. Several issues he brought up were that the name of the organization is not Mississippi River Planning Commission. The code says it is a planning commission but does not identify that as the name. Graber said he will follow through with the Legislature and is very angry with the process – or lack of.

Adjourn for Foundation Report followed by the press release at the Port of Burlington Welcome Center.



**Iowa Mississippi River Parkway Commission
Called Meeting
October 30, 2023; 9:30 a.m. Monday
Conference call via telephone
Dial: 712-432-3900 then enter 7473245#**

MRPC Call to order and roll call

Chairman Martin Graber called the meeting to order with Jane Regan, Roger Thomas, James Janett, Lesley Webster, Katie Hammond, Paula Mayer, and Ann Geiger attending

Absent: Lisa Walsh, Paul Carroll, Jane Regan

Others: Emily Whaley, Iowa DOT

Review and approve bids for services and supplies

Approve purchase of 2 interpretive signs at \$278 each from National Office. Hammond moved to approve the purchase, Mayer seconded the motion and it was approved for a total of \$556.00.

Pay for items for press conference for Cascade Bridge grant in Burlington

Musicians Pro Shop for sound system	\$265.00
-------------------------------------	----------

Item removed from agenda.

Reimburse Geiger for table banners	\$150.00
------------------------------------	----------

Pike donation flyers	\$ 40.00
----------------------	----------

Items removed from agenda

Discussion and Annual Election of Officers

Thomas moved to continue Graber as chair. Motion was seconded by Janett and approved. Mayer moved, with a second by Webster, to approve retaining the rest of the existing slate of officers. Geiger amended the motion to ask for a volunteer for a new treasurer. Mayer volunteered. Mayer moved, with a second by Webster, to approve the amendment. The motion carried.

The motion to approve the original amended motion was approved by acclamation.

National Committee appointments

Heritage and Culture – Geiger, Janett

Transportation – Walsh

Marketing – Mayer

Environmental and Agriculture – Hammond, Webster

Graber will take list of interested commissioners and submit to national office.

Meeting Adjourned



Iowa Mississippi River Parkway Commission
Meeting, 10:00 a.m. January 26, 2024
Hurstville Interpretive Center
18670 63rd Street, Maquoketa, IA 52060

Chairman Martin Graber called the meeting to order

Present: Lisa Walsh, Lesley Weber, Paula Mayer, Roger Thomas, Jim Janett, and Ann Geiger

Others Present: Emily Whaley, DOT, Jessica Wagner, DNR

Wagner welcomed the Commission and gave a brief history of the Hurstville Center. She said in 2000 the wetlands were disrupted due to road work on Highway 61. Later the nature center opened because the land was given to the county. The Center does programs for schools, anything dealing with wetlands. In addition, it does a lot of home school programs with a focus on Iowa wildlife.

Items to be added to the Agenda

Mayer said Iowa Public Television offered to use footage by the national office it shot on Iowa's east coast. Thomas suggested asking if some of the existing material from each county could be added. Mayer will check.

Motion by Webster, with a second by Thomas, to approve of October 10th meeting minutes with a clerical correction to an amount from \$1,500 to \$15,000. The motion carried.

Motion by Walsh, with a second by Janett, to approve the minutes of the October 30th call-in meeting. Motion carried.

Motion by Thomas, with a second by Walsh, to approve the Treasurer's report. The motion carried.

Budget discussion

Mayer said she can obtain a service to send up to 5,000 emails for free. She said it is another way to spread information about the MRPC. The Commission requested she pursue.

The Commission discussed running the annual radio ads. Walsh said Leadership Iowa was focusing on younger people as is IDA. After discussion of the timeframe for last year's ads, Mayer suggested contacting the radio stations for the best 10-week time frame to run the ads. Geiger will contact the stations for quotes.

Motion by Mayer, with a second by Walsh, to approve a Not-to-Exceed amount of \$12,000 for quotes for radio ads. Motion carried.

Geiger said she was contacted by some visitor centers about obtaining the tear sheets. Graber said in his opinion the more information the Commission can distribute the better. Mayer will get bids for tear sheets to include the visitor centers in the area.

With regard to the possible elimination of the MRPC Commission by the State of Iowa, Graber said this is the time to send letters of support for the Commission, because the legislature does not have a bill written as yet.

Chairman's Report

The national office is concerned about the number of states having problems with budgets. It is also looking for possible sites for future conventions. Normally they are scheduled three years out. Webster suggested volunteering to host a convention in Burlington. Both Walsh and Geiger were not in favor at this time.

National Committee Reports

Marketing Committee – The Committee discussed budget concerns and how to better promote the Great River Road.

Transportation – No report

Environment, Recreation and Agriculture – Discussed how to get better technical assistance.

Culture and Heritage – More discussion as to how to explain the ICenters and improving the application process. Currently applications are not available on the website. There was also a movement to approve the application without waiting for the annual meeting.

Iowa Scenic Byways – Webster said there was discussion about having a booth at the Iowa State Fair, but it was not decided.

The next meeting will be April 19th in Dubuque. Site to be decided later.
Adjourn for Foundation Report



**Iowa Mississippi River Parkway Commission
Called Meeting
March 1, 2024 9:30 a.m. Friday
Call via telephone
Dial: 712-432-3900 then enter 7473245#**

The meeting was called to order by Martin Graber, Chair.

Present: Lisa Walsh, Katy Hammond, Lesley Webster, Paula Mayer, James Janett, and Ann Geiger

Others Present: Emily Whaley, Iowa DOT

Budget discussion. Motion by Hammond, second by Walsh, to approve the current budget.

The Commission held a discussion of the radio ads.

On motion by Geiger, with a second by Walsh, the time and amount of the ads were approved.

Review and approve radio bids

IHeart Radio	WMT Des Moines	April 11- June 16	\$2,368.00
	KKDM		<u>2,600.00</u>
			\$4,968.00
KVIK Radio		April 8 - June 16	\$5,500.00
TOTAL			<u>\$10,468.00</u>

The Commission held a discussion regarding the bids for the tear sheets. On motion by Geiger, with a second by Mayer, the Dimensional Graphics bid for 50,000 sheets for \$3,519.00 was selected upon approval by the DOT. Motion carried.

Motion to move \$3,500 from the line item for travel out-of-state to advertising in by Walsh with a second by Mayer. Motion carried.

Graber, as Chair, said the January 26, 2024 minutes will be approved at the next regular meeting, on April 12, 2024.

The meeting was adjourned.



**Iowa Mississippi River Parkway Commission
Meeting, 10:00 a.m. April 12, 2024
Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium
350 East Third Street Dubuque, Iowa 52001**

Chairman Martin Graber called the meeting to order.

Present: Lisa Walsh, Paul Carroll, Paula Mayer, and Ann Geiger

Absent: Jim Janett, Roger Thomas, Katie Hammond, and Lesley Webster

Others Present: Emily Whaley, DOT; Kevin Firnstahl; Jason Duba Dubuque Economic Development; Jennifer Tiggis Mines of Spain; Kurt Strand, Dubuque Historical Society; and the Museum; and Ann Carroll

Geiger introduced Firnstahl who acted as host and arranged for the meeting. He is the former clerk at the City of Dubuque, and since retirement he is active in organizations such as Dubuque's international sister city relationships, theater, economic development, and he hosts and gives tours for the Viking cruises. Firnstahl has applied for a position on the commission.

Tiggis said she is the president of the Mines and is a volunteer. The interpretive center was doubled in size in 2010. She volunteers one day a week. It was originally a DNR project, they stepped away and came back, and they have a 28E agreement with the Bellevue organization. The Mines gets \$5,000 annually. They are updating information and focusing more on Native Americans. It is slow because they are checking to be sure everything is being done correctly. The friends group has about 200 members and has a small membership fee to support the budget.

Strand gave a history of the Museum, its growth and how it has grown. They have 50 full time and 60 part-time employees. About 200,000 visitors visit a year. The museum focuses on the river history, Dubuque history, and conservation. There are 900 people from the Marshall Islands who are moving here because their lands are disappearing. 70-80% of Viking cruise passengers visit while docked. Lots of school groups visit. The museum has approximately 20,000 species and 2,000 artifacts. They work with the Great Plains AEA to help with the museum's all-inclusive opportunity for everyone.

Duba told about the City of Dubuque. He thanked the last fall letter of support which helped get the award for funding. It is currently working on a new bike path, some of which is on the GRR.

Approval of Minutes

Motion by Walsh to approve the minutes of the January 26th meeting, seconded by

Mayer and the motion carried. Motion by Mayer to approve the minutes of the March 1st meeting, seconded by Walsh and motion carried

Approval of Treasurer's report

Motion by Carroll to approve the Treasurers Report, seconded by Walsh and the motion carried.

Discussion of budgets and ideas for FY '25 projects

Graber said the next annual meeting will be in Winona MN.

Mayer said there are \$250 Spotify ads which we might be able to use. She is investigating and talking with PBS for use of their publicity.

Walsh talked about Redbud and possible use of their shirts during RAGBRAI for publicity. She said she had good results with them for the Grant publicity. Geiger suggested using the All American Road logo on them to raise awareness. She said many people travel to visit the All American Roads. U.S. citizens look at California's Big Sur and the Appalachian Trail, but international Visitors come to the Great River Road. Firnstahl agreed. She suggested putting information things in camp grounds and airports. Geiger said maybe we could advertise places to touch the river. Visitors don't necessarily just want to look.

Walsh said we need to meet individually with the ICenters. Graber suggested having a zoom meeting for part of a quarterly meeting for training for ICenters in the area, dividing the state into thirds which is the logical division.

Carroll suggested getting some more programs for home-schooling.

Geiger said the Corps printed a large book it distributed to schools which were on slick paper with tearout sheets which could be copied and replaced for reuse. The book taught about the river. She said it would be nice if we could get it done again. Both Mayer and Geiger have a copy. Graber said he thinks it is still done and will ask.

Chairman's report

Graber said the national is focusing on the annual meeting and looking for sponsorships. He also said this upcoming week the legislature will be discussing boards and commissions.

National Committee Reports

Marketing Committee No report

Transportation No report

Environment, Recreation and Agriculture No report

Heritage and Culture No report

Mayer said there are no current minutes on the website for any of the committees.

Next meeting June 14 in Muscatine.



**Iowa Mississippi River Parkway Commission
Meeting, 10:00 a.m. June 14, 2024
National Pearl Button Museum
117 West 2nd, Muscatine Iowa 52761**

Chairman Martin Graber called the meeting to order.

Present: Lisa Walsh, Paul Carroll, Paula Mayer, Katie Hammond, and Ann Geiger

Absent: Jim Janett, Roger Thomas, and Lesley Webster

Others Present: Emily Whaley, DOT; Dustin Joy, Museum Director; Rebecca Paulson, Muscatine Tourism; Lora Friese, Economic Development; Kathy Aders, Sales and Marketing for Merrill Hotel

Paulson talked about their learning center. They have constructed a 16,000 pound statue of a watermelon slice made of steel which they are working Guinness Book to get a category.

Joy thanked everyone for coming to the museum and said many visitors coming through the GRR. The Commission complemented him on the appearance and opportunities which had expanded greatly since the last time it was there.

Ader gave a presentation for a possible conference in Iowa.

Fries gave an update on possible grants and the timeline for them. The Commission's meetings are out of sync for applications for some grants, but she will work with it to see what is available.

Items to add to the Agenda

Hammond said she would like to nominate the Environmental Learning Center at Discovery Park in Muscatine as an Interpretive Center. It is in a 100-acre park, ¼ mile from H61 and 2-3 miles from the Mississippi. There is an historic barn on site, home of an arboretum with live animals, snakes, raptors. There is an old hunter/trappers lodge. The facility is owned by the county and funded by tax dollars. Very hands-on place for animals and the environment along the Mississippi. July 16th is next Heritage and Culture meeting to present.

Carroll is building an educational pavilion at the Fairport Fish Hatchery. Walsh suggested we wait a year to consider that as an ICenter. Put the learning Center forward this year or attach the hatchery to the Button Museum info.

Mayer is collecting bids for 20,000 passports. The DOT is not printing them any more because the state can't print them in the correct size. Friese said there is a grant opportunity in August for printing. The Commission decided to do a small printing of 20,000 now from the state and apply for the grant in August for a full printing. Friese suggested a few changes to the passport regarding photos, and Mayer will be sure all the contact information is updated. In addition, if the Muscatine Discovery Center is approved as an ICenter, it can be included.

Motion by Mayer to approve the minutes of the April 12, 2024 meeting, seconded by Hammond and the motion carried.

Motion by Geiger to approve the Treasurers Report, seconded by Mayer and the motion carried.

Graber reviewed the budget to see what is still outstanding. There was a long discussion regarding the balance left in the budget. The outstanding issue is with the radio ads from LA Communications. Geiger called them and got any outstanding balance. Whaley will check with the DOT to see the final amount.

At the October meeting the Commission approved \$278.00 each for two large metal pole signs destroyed by storms in Ft. Madison and Keokuk. Both signs have been received and delivered. A bill on behalf of Lang Sign from the National office for \$398.68 for each sign. No notice has been given to the Commission by the National Office regarding the amount change, and Geiger discussed the issue with Lang.

Motion by Mayer to pay the original \$278.00 per sign totaling \$556, seconded by Carroll and the motion carried.

Canadian Heritage organization was briefly discussed with regard to moving forward with future inclusion of Canada in our activities. Geiger explained Firnstahl applied to the organization when he was City Clerk in Dubuque on behalf of its international program, but the city did was not interested. However, he is still included as an individual. Graber said the Canadians used to come to meetings and it would be good to reach out to them again.

Graber gave the Chairman's Report and said the road on the way to Montrose has fallen in again. Graber said, in his opinion, it was not properly previously repaired. The estimate is \$700,000 and the DOT said it would put \$500,000 to help fix, but \$200,000 needs to be raised. Walsh said there is money to be had. She said Sen. Miller helped getting funding for the Burlington airport. With further discussion it was decided the Commission might be able to help with funding.

Old Ft. Madison has the walls knocked down. There is a new 501(3)c organized to reactivate the fort with some updated changes.

Geiger said there is a new director at the Buffalo Bill Museum. Rita Farro recently started, because the prior director resigned because of his health.

A photo op sponsored by the university with pre-loaded questions being answered and a photo taken. Hammond said some of the county conservation sites have a board up with a photo opportunity. Something to look into.

Discussion to approve the 2025 budget to remain basically the same as this year to reduce the radio ads and include \$2,500 for a possible grant match. Moving \$100 from administration to travel. Funding for the annual meeting travel was discussed and whether or not

restrictions will be placed to determine who will be funded to go. Hammond moved to approve the changes, Carroll seconded the motion and it carried.

The next meeting will be held in Princeton on July 26th.

Meeting was adjourned.