

State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission
The Blue Lion, Fort Smith
August 17, 2023, 9:00 a.m.
APPROVED 09/20/2023

Commissioners Present

Austin Albers
Blair Allen
Rebecca Baker
Trey Berry
Ron Gossage
Kalene Griffith
Eric Jackson
Westen Lewey
Jim Shamburger
Mike Wilson
Randy Wolfinbarger, Chair

Commissioners Absent

Mike Gibson
Bob Connell
Shash Goyal
Molly Houseworth-Jackson

Department Staff

Shea Lewis, ADPHT Secretary, State Parks Director
Elaine Lienhart, ADPHT Executive Assistant
Daniel Faulkner, ADPHT General Counsel
Suzanne Grobmyer, ADPHT Chief of Staff
Jami Fisher, ADPHT CFO
Shealyn Sowers, ADPHT Chief of Communications
Justin Rotton, ADPHT Deputy Chief of Communications
Kristin Puckett, Deputy Director, Tourism
Susie Cowan, Project Coordinator, Tourism
Jeff King, Deputy Director, Arkansas State Parks
Yolanda Brown, Executive Assistant Arkansas State Parks
Chris Myers, Planning & Development Manager, Arkansas State Parks
Ed Thomas, Chief of Emergency Services, Arkansas State Parks
Darin Mitchell, Information & Innovation Manager, Arkansas State Parks
Mike Wilson, Parks Operations Manager, Arkansas State Parks
Tom Stolarz, Region 1 Supervisor, Arkansas State Parks
Mike Farringer, Region 4 Supervisor, Arkansas State Parks
Dawn Reyes-Mier, Welcome Center Manager, Tourism

CJRW

Darin Gray
Jessica Frahm
Dalaney Thomas
Blake Bowlin
Jill Joslin
Ashley Moore

Miles Media

Susie Kardas

Guests

Lynn Wasson, Director of Fort Smith, CVB
Grady Spann, CE of Northwest Arkansas Land Trust
Gary Jones, Gary Jones Video
Arlene Dillon
Steven Skidgel
Jessi Solley, Sen. Boozman Assistant Project Director
Jack L. Dillon Jr.

Welcome and Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:02 a.m. by Chair Randy Wolfinbarger. Elaine Lienhart called the roll. Chair Randy Wolfinbarger welcomed and recognized guests and thanked the Fort Smith A&P as well as the U.S. Marshals Museum for their hospitality.

Approval of Agenda

Chairman Randy Wolfinbarger asked for a motion to approve the agenda.

Commissioner Austin Albers made a motion to approve the agenda. Trey Berry seconded, and the motion carried.

Approval of July 2023 Minutes

Chairman Randy Wolfinbarger asked for a motion to approve the July 2023 minutes.

Commissioner Jim Shamburger made a motion to approve the minutes. Ron Gossage seconded, and the motion carried.

Public Comment

Daniel Faulkner, ADPHT General Counsel, opened the opportunity for public comment on the proposed alcoholic beverage permit rule at state parks. A written comment was submitted by Connie Burks that was emailed to the commissioners.

Secretary's Report

Secretary Shea Lewis extended appreciation to the U.S. Marshals Museum for their hospitality. He reported that in addition to his appointment as the Department Secretary, he will also continue to serve as State Parks Director. The Tourism Director's position has been advertised. Lewis is working on a list of specific goals for each division. These will be announced at the next meeting.

The department is partnering to promote a new event in 2024, the Arkansas Graveler. The bike ride will begin in Fayetteville, cross the state, and end in Jonesboro. A press conference announcing the event will be held at Lake Wilson in Fayetteville on August 24 at 10 a.m.

The Salt Bowl will be played at War Memorial Stadium on August 26. The University of Arkansas Razorbacks game is September 2.

Members of the Tourism and Communications teams are planning to attend ESTO in Savannah, GA. The Natural State Initiative continues and is going before the ALC on September 1 with a focus on the opportunity zones around specific state parks.

The Office of Outdoor Recreation work continues around Pinnacle Mountain and developing an economic impact report.

Monument Art on the Monument Trails continues to develop. There are three new pieces at Pinnacle Mountain. These art pieces are effective interpretive tools.

The work with the Monument Climbs continues.

The next meeting of the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission will be a joint meeting with the Arkansas Economic Development Commission. This will be an opportunity for a discussion about outdoor economy.

Suzanne Grobmyer, ADPHT Chief of Staff, led a discussion to generate topics for the next meeting.

FINANCIAL REPORT – JULY 31, 2023

Chief Fiscal Officer Jami Fisher presented the FY 2024 Year-to-Date Financial Report for the one (01) month period ending July 31, 2024.

FY 2024 Year-to-Date Revenues were:

- Parks Division Operating Revenue - \$3,958,468 an increase of 7.38%
- War Memorial Operating Revenue - \$113,016 an increase of 12.99%
- 1/8 Cent Conservation Tax Revenue - \$3,865,331 an increase of 2.47%
- 2% Gross Tax Collections - \$2,633,717 an increase of 12.37%

FY 2024 Year-to-Date Expenditures were:

- Parks Division (including Construction and Grants) - \$9,046,403 a increase of 22.78%
- Tourism Division - \$2,594,426 an increase of 362.35%
- War Memorial - \$124,790 a increase of 35.78%
- Department Total - \$11,765,619 an increase of 46.69%

Please Note: percentages (%) are in comparison to the same period in the prior fiscal year.

Commissioner Jim Shamburger made a motion to approve the financials; Eric Jackson seconded, and the motion carried.

TOURISM DIVISION

Director's Report

Kristine Puckett, Deputy Director, presented the Tourism report. Arkansas Tourism will be partnering with the Little Rock Convention & Visitors Bureau to host the 40th annual Domestic Showcase with the Southeast Tourism Society that will be held in Little Rock in March 2024.

Arkansas Tourism will be planning and hosting up to six post-event FAM tours.

Puckett reported about the Retirement & Relocation meeting. There were four retirement communities represented to collaborate on tradeshows for the upcoming year.

There is a plan to meet with the Arkansas Association of Convention and Visitors Bureaus membership to assess their needs before the next SPRTC meeting.

At the September meeting there will be five cities presenting their bids for the next three upcoming Governor's Conferences on Tourism. They will be bidding for 2025, 2026, and 2027.

The 2022 Economic Impact Report is planned to be released at the September meeting.

Puckett also presented an update on the Toronto Activation hosted prior to Destinations International last year. It was held in market to catch attention from the media and travel trade. Ten of the media followed up when they came to Arkansas for a FAM tour two months ago. Since then, they have written 15 articles about Arkansas, and more are expected in the autumn and winter months.

There was a Certificate of Appreciation introduced for Leesha Miller who will be retiring as the Manager of the Harrison Welcome Center at the end of September, after ten years of service.

Commissioner Ron Gossage made a motion to approve the certificate; Weston Lewey seconded, and the motion carried.

Marketing and Research

Dalaney Thomas, CJRW, presented a recap of the Denver activation. Arkansas Tourism partnered with Arkansas State Parks and local businesses and artists. It was a multimedia approach. Paid ads were served to the local area to amplify the messaging, and they found success in the distribution of branded items. She emphasized it was a good test to learn how to better implement market activation in the future.

State Parks Division

Director's Report

Jeff King, Deputy Director, presented the Director's Report for the Parks Division.

King provided a high-level fiscal overview:

- FY2024 Construction Appropriation Totals **\$100,220,615** (compared to \$62,050,872 in FY23)
- Major Maintenance Appropriation Totals **\$4,000,000** (compared to \$3,191,841 in FY23)
- Capital Outlay Appropriation Totals **\$5,034,347** (compared to \$3,589,483)
- Debt Service Appropriation of **\$1,500,000** (final year)
- Overall, Park Operating Revenue up **\$271,984 or 7% YOY/YTD**
- Petit Jean continues revenue upswing, up **\$55,129 or 14%**
- Slip Rental Revenues up **\$22,316 or 176%**

King continued, providing an update for the completion of the Pinnacle Mountain State Park Visitor Center:

- The visitor center building is substantially complete. The partial substantial completion was issued on July 10, 2023.
- Exhibits are to be installed September 11-25, 2023.
- Full completion is anticipated on October 1, 2023.
- Separate Contract for landscaping installation is scheduled for completion November 1, 2023.

He announced upcoming War Memorial Stadium Events:

- The Salt Bowl football game, Benton versus Bryant will take place Saturday, August 26, 2023, at 7:00 PM.

- The opening game of the 2023 Razorback Season, University of Arkansas versus Western Carolina, will take place September 2, 2023, at 3:00 PM.
- Volunteers from across the Department will support the War Memorial Events.

A 75th War Memorial Anniversary logo was submitted to the U of A for approval to place a decal on each of the Razorback team players helmets.

The Communications team led by Shealyn Sowers and Justin Rotton have been working to tell the story of War Memorial Stadium. War Memorial Stadium was originally dedicated on September 18, 1948, as a tribute to those who served in World War II. The Communications team will provide a reprint of the 1948 newspaper article that was in dedication of War Memorial Stadium; it displayed different articles. The reprint will be the original articles printed onto one sheet of paper that each game attendee can take home as a souvenir to remember the event.

In cooperation and hosting with the Little Rock CVB there will be a Paint the Town Red event Friday, September 2, 2023, at 3:00 PM. A parade will start downtown and conclude at the Security Bank Amphitheater where a pep rally will be held.

Jeff King announced that the ASP Centennial Tour with First Gentleman Bryan Sanders is continuing. There were 26 park visits from July 30-August 10, 2023. It has been a great opportunity to get the First Gentleman to our parks to meet the parks staff and to see the daily operations.

Jeff King mentioned the ASP Annual Superintendent's Conference to be held at Mount Magazine State Park, September 26-28, 2023. The Governor and the First Gentleman are expected to attend the conference on September 27, 2023, for dinner and to address the park superintendents.

Jeff King provided an update on the Annual Interpretation Workshop. The workshop was held at DeGray Lake Resort State Park, August 14-16, 2023. There were 65 attendees. The workshop included planning sessions, roundtable discussions, and structural activities focused on how teams better facilitate interpretative opportunities.

King highlighted an event that took place in mid-July with The Morning Mayhem radio show on 103.7 The Buzz, with former commissioner David Bazzel hosting a live remote at Crater of Diamond State Park on a summer tour of fun.

Jeff King highlighted a partnership with Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area project with UAMS and Washington Regional Medical Center. The partnership will connect visitors to nature and promote healthy lifestyles. The partnership will also give older adults a fun way to enhance their health by connecting them to outdoor resources.

Jeff King provided a 2024 Eclipse booking update:

- There are 27 State Parks in the path of totality; 21 parks have overnight accommodations.
- 15 parks with accommodations are fully booked.
- ASP has 1,404 individual bookings made for the 4-night minimum.
- Overall projected revenue from reservations totals \$446,424 (ADR of \$80.96).
- Camping and Unique Lodging are \$177,993 (ADR \$41.72).
- Cabins are \$130,896 (ADR \$216.00).
- Lodges are \$137,535 (ADR \$214.23).

- The top five reservation locations are DeGray Lake Resort, Petit Jean, Bull Shoals White River, Daisy, and Lake Catherine State Parks.
- The top five states for guests in order are Arkansas, Louisiana, Tennessee, Florida, and Missouri.

Ed Thomas, Parks Chief of Emergency Services, provided an Emergency Services update:

- The Emergency services team will be working with 17 different agencies for the Salt Bowl and the Razorback game at War Memorial Stadium, putting at least one member from each agency inside a unified command, using the new app called Radios to Communicate with one another. The emergency services team will also be using the ISOMS App to communicate with other emergency services agencies. All Clerk II reports have been transferred to the program, August 1, 2023.
- In an incident comparison report, incidents increased about 6% from 2019 to current.
- 36 body cameras have been assigned to officers.
- 3,300 videos have been entered into evidence storage.

Britney Thomas was recognized with an award for saving a life by administering NARCAN; all being caught on body cam.

Mike Wilson, Parks Operations Manager, provided an operations update for Historic Washington State Park: HWSP has a total of 70 buildings, 122,781 total sq. ft. with an average sq. ft. of 1,754. There are 45 Buildings (1974) within the designated Historic District, with a building age of 1831 to 2019. Buildings held in collections are just over 10,100 objects and archival pieces.

Historic Washington’s program numbers are down from CY2017 to CY2023. Visitor Center numbers are currently 5,677 compared to 11, 537 in CY2017. Bed and Breakfast totals are up 12.5 % compared to 4.6% in FY2021.

Historic Washington State Park had a total income of \$304,854, an increase from FY2022, a total expense amount of \$2,077,132, an increase from FY2022.

Chris Myers, Planning and Development Manager, reported that Historic Washington State Park’s 7-year FY Total was in the amount of \$621,769 for 57 projects.

Chris Myers reported seven completed CIP Projects for FY18-FY23 totaling \$3,317,238.54:

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|--------------------------------------|----------------|-----------|
| • Moss Williams House Stabilization | \$169,000.00 | 1-2-2018 |
| • Jail Bed & Breakfast Phase I | \$289,499.26 | 4-6-2018 |
| • Bladesmith School Roof Replacement | \$91,260.00 | 1-25-2019 |
| • Jail Bed & Breakfast Phase II | \$313,842.02 | 4-27-2020 |
| • Brunson House Renovation | \$1,702,969.40 | 6-9-2020 |
| • Reroof 5 Structures | \$349,839.66 | 4-27-2022 |
| • Reroof 6 Structures | \$400,828.60 | 6- 8-2023 |

Current CIP projects include five projects totaling \$3,086,370.00:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| • Renovation of Moss Williams House | \$509,370.00 | Construction Underway |
| • Stabilization of Weapons Museum | \$397,000.00 | Construction Underway |
| • 1874 Courthouse HVAC & Interior Imp | \$1,500,000.00 | Design Underway |
| • 1874 Courthouse Exhibits | \$250,000.00 | Design Underway |
| • Sidewalk Improvements | \$430,000.00 | Design Underway |

Darin Mitchell, Information & Innovation Manager, reported that as part of the Historic Washington State Park FY24 Proposed Acquisition Plan, the Historic Washington Foundation has offered to sell five properties, identified as preserving or contributing to the historic fabric of the original town of Washington, Arkansas. These properties include, the 1852 Stuart-Smith House, 1889 Presbyterian Church, Livery Stable property, Post Office property, and the Carrigan Field property.

Mitchell also provided a Historic Washington State Park Acquisition State Update:

- SPRTC approval to initiate the A.C.A. 22-4-106 process was obtained at the July meeting.
- Preliminary budget estimates for acquisition have been developed.
- Per SPRTC request, a detailed acquisition summary for the acquisition of Historic Washington Foundation properties has been prepared for presentation at the August 2023 meeting.

The next steps pursuant to A.C.A 22-4-106, a letter will be drafted seeking the Governor's favorable advice on the proposed acquisition; upon which, surveys, appraisals, title work, and offers will be purchased or prepared.

MISCELLANEOUS/CLOSING

Due to legislation, the Commission's two emeritus positions were eliminated. Commission Chair Randy Wolfinbarger called for a nominating committee meeting to recommend a new vice-chair. Wolfinbarger announced Jim Shamburger is nominated as Vice-Chair for the remaining 2023 CY, and Commissioner Blair Allen is nominated for CY 2024.

Eric Wilson made the motion to accept the nominations; Mike Wilson seconded, and the motion carried.

With no further business, a motion was made to adjourn.

Weston Lewey made the motion to adjourn; Ron Gossage seconded, and the motion carried.

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I acknowledge these minutes are approved:

/S/ Randy Wolfinbarger 9/20/2023
Randy Wolfinbarger, Chair