

STATE PARKS, RECREATION AND TRAVEL COMMISSION

1100 North St., Little Rock and Zoom

10 a.m., January 28, 2021

APPROVED with Commissioner Gill's amendment February 28, 2021

Commissioners Present

Kalene Griffith, Chair <i>via Zoom</i>	Ron Gossage
Eric Jackson, Vice Chair	Shash Goyal <i>via Zoom</i>
Blair Allen	Molly Jackson <i>via Zoom</i>
Jeff Baskin	Weston Lewey
Bob Connell	Jim Shamburger
Mike Gibson <i>via Zoom</i>	Mike Wilson
John Gill	Randy Wolfenbarger <i>via Zoom</i>

Commissioners Absent

Austin Albers
Montine McNulty
Ness Sechrest

Staff Present

Stacy Hurst, Secretary
Jim Andrews, General Counsel
Tammy Boyce, Tourism Director Assistant
LaJana Carroll, State Parks Executive Assistant
Leah DiPietro, Tourism Communications Manager
Cynthia Dunlap, Chief Financial Officer
Kelly Farrell, Program Services Manager
Theresa Helliwell, Agency Controller
Joe Jacobs, State Parks Marketing and Revenue Manager
Leigha Jones, Tourism Development Consultant
Jeff King, Parks Manager of Planning & Development
Jessica Ledbetter, Tourism Sales Manager
Shea Lewis, State Parks Deputy Director
Elaine Lienhart, ADPHT Executive Assistant
Travis Napper, Tourism Director
Caleb Osborne, Chief of Staff
Kristine Puckett, Tourism Deputy Director
Monica Rued, State Parks Public Information Officer
Grady Spann, State Parks Director

CJRW

Darin Gray
Chris Ho
Brian Kratkiewicz
Jennifer Morgan
Dalaney Thomas
Sarah VanDoorn
Margaret Willis
Keegan Wright

Miles Partnership

Daniel Czerwinski
Ileana Franscone
Susi Kardas

Guests

Arkansas Public Broadcasting System
Gary Jones
Inuvo
Stephanie Slagle
Luke Story

Call to Order

Chair Kalene Griffith called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and Elaine Lienhart called the roll.

John Gill reported on the State Parks Committee meeting regarding the decision to name the new visitor's center at Petit Jean State Park after Richard Davies.

"The new visitor's center at Petit Jean State Park was built on the site of Hardison Hall, named for Dr. T. W. Hardison. November 2015, at a commission meeting, the new visitor's center was named (after) Richard Davies. I want to share a letter that I wrote to the Conway County Historical Preservation Association back in 2019, part of which says, 'Long before I was on the commission, I was familiar with Dr. Hardison's State Parks efforts. Unfortunately, Hardison Hall is out of date and efforts to find a readapted use were unsuccessful after years of trying to do so. As we both know historic preservation is a challenge. The Commission, I believe, has made a commendable effort to preserve Dr. Hardison's historic connection with Petit Jean State Park by commending a sculpture of Dr. Hardison, to be placed at the entrance of the new facility. Clearly, Dr. Hardison's vision of State Parks system became a legend, and as you pointed out, he served the commission for 18 years with such attention to detail by cataloging Petit Jean American Indian Rock Art. So, it is with Richard Davies. His vision for adequate State Park funding is a legend as well. The 1937 Parks Commission report made while Dr. Hardison was a commissioner, observed that the challenge for the future, is to maintain the parks. Two years before Mr. Davies became a State Park employee, park maintenance was so bad that Governor Bumpers described our State Parks system as "a statewide embarrassment." Essentially what Dr. Hardison had founded was in shambles. Richard Davies' tenure was 42 years at which he served a combined 39 years as State Parks Director and Executive Director of the Department of Parks and Tourism. Davies was relentless in advocating increased support for our parks through legislative funding, real estate transfer tax, and other sources. Still, each year, it was a struggle because there was no designated source of revenue for parks. So, Mr. Davies and Steve Wilson, the director of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission at the time, led a five year effort to pass the 1/8 cent sales tax constitutional amendment to fund Arkansas State Parks, Game and Fish, and the Department of Heritage. Today, that tax has produced over \$500 million in State Parks all over Arkansas. I have heard it said that we have the best State Parks system in America, and that is in large part, due to Mr. Davies' tireless dedication and devotion to the making of (an) outstanding parks system, and it is free. Forty-four states charge admission. Upon his retirement, Richard Davies left a free and valuable and viable State Parks system, which I believe is second to none in America. A system that has secure funding, which was not available when he came on the scene. We need to recognize his vision seminal contribution to Arkansas State Parks, I hope this has helped in your understanding of the commission's decision.'

At yesterday's Park Committee (meeting), we learned that the 1/8 cent has produced over \$189 million dollars of new construction. Most of which replaced inadequate and dilapidated facilities, and \$35 million for maintenance for the older facilities. If you're counting that up, that's almost ¼ of a billion dollars due to the efforts of Mr. Davies, Mr. Wilson, and Governor Mike Huckabee, who led the tax election, and many others. Our Department lawyer has determined that the November 2015 Commission did not comply with Arkansas law. This Commission is a government agency. Our commissioners are agents of the government. Each of us represent the government of the people. The people have spoken. I therefore move, Madam Chairman, that the commission rescind its 2015 action, and that the new Petit Jean State Park Visitor's Center, be named for Dr. T. W. Hardison, the founder of the Arkansas State Parks system."

John Gill motioned for a name change recommendation for the new visitor's center at Petit Jean State Park from Richard Davies to Dr. T.W. Hardison. Eric Jackson seconded, and the motion passed.

Approval of the Agenda

Eric Jackson moved to approve the agenda as presented. Shash Goyal seconded, and the motion carried.

Approval of the of November Minutes

Weston Lewey moved to approve the minutes as presented. Mike Wilson seconded, and the motion carried.

Financial Report

Chief Fiscal Officer Cynthia Dunlap presented the FY 2021 year-to-date financial report for the six-month period ending December 31, 2020.

FY 2021 Year-to-Date Revenues were:

- Parks Division Operating Revenue - \$14,067,306 a decrease of -1.95%
- War Memorial Operating Revenue - \$445,659 a decrease of -61.78%
- 1/8% Tax Revenues - \$19,349,445 an increase of 8.41%
- 2% Gross Tax collections - \$8,377,147 a decrease of -19.23%

FY 2021 Year-to-Date Expenditures were:

- Department Total - \$50,741,858 a decrease of -13.12%
- Parks Division (including Construction and Grants) - \$39,766,096 a decrease of -13.58%
- Tourism Division - \$7,056,427 a decrease of -20.36%
- Keep Arkansas Beautiful - \$255,981 a decrease of -3.53%
- Administration Division - \$3,049,035 an increase of 80.46%**
- War Memorial - \$429,989 a decrease of -61.71%

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

** Beginning in FY 2021, the Central Administration Division includes ADPHT Shared Services which represents the appropriation for positions that are identified as providing services to all divisions of the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism. Appropriation and funding are allocated to Shared Services, as applicable, from other Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism divisions.

Jim Shamburger moved to approve the financials as presented. Eric Jackson seconded, and the motion carried.

Secretary Report

Caleb Osborne, Chief of Staff, reported that Secretary Stacy Hurst is currently involved in the legislative session and will join the meeting later.

Osborne updated the commission on the results of the Business Interruption Grant. There were 3,118 applicants and 2,139 businesses received an award. A total of \$47.9 million was awarded, with an average of \$22,000 to each business or sole proprietorship.

Osborne touched on the Legislature being in session. There are bills being worked on for the Department and once the language has been finalized it will be brought before the committee for final review.

Jim Andrews, General Counsel, advised that SPRTC commissioners must file their Statement of Financial Interest per Arkansas Code Annotated 21-8-701. The form is due by January 31, 2021, to the Secretary of State's office.

Andrews advised per Arkansas Code Annotated 25-16-904 the Commission must approve its annual stipend at the first meeting of the calendar year. The stipend is \$85 per day by statute; SPRTC's approved stipend rate of \$65 for the fiscal year 2020 was waived in March, April, May, and June to help the department with budget items for the year. Discussion ensued.

John Gill moved to approve the commissioners' stipend of \$85 for calendar year 2021. Eric Jackson seconded, and the motion carried.

Andrews advised per Arkansas Code 25-16-902, the Commission must approve its travel reimbursement at the first meeting of the calendar year.

Jim Shamburger moved to approve the commissioners' travel reimbursement for the calendar year 2021. Weston Lewey seconded, and the motion carried.

Andrews informed Commissioners of the board member handbook published in 2015 by the Attorney General's office, which is available on the Attorney General's website. Commissioners were encouraged to obtain a copy.

Discussion ensued over the hard work that was put into the CARES Act by Stacy Hurst, Kalene Griffith, Gretchen Hall, Steve Arrison, Travis Napper and his team in Tourism, advertising and promotion commissions, and various hotels for their due diligence in helping communities in the state get some relief during this unprecedented time and to get the act passed.

John Gill made a motion to reflect the minutes show gratitude to Stacy Hurst and the entire team who put in the effort to get the CARES act funds distributed. Blair Allen seconded, and the motion carried.

TOURISM DIVISION

Director's Report

Travis Napper reported that Tourism staff is still working remotely and in-office work is optional. Napper's visits around the state include Marion to see the Sultana Museum, Hot Springs, and Petit Jean State Park. Napper informed the Commission that Tourism is working on a partnership with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission and have come up with some good data on who is coming into the state and from where.

Napper reviewed the CARES Act Grant and the impact it had. Twenty-one advertising and promotion commissions and event facilities received funding. There was a total of \$3.5 million awarded. The range of funds given was from \$370 to \$1.1 million. The program was built in two weeks and implemented in three weeks. Napper thanked all those involved, and specifically the following on his staff: Kristine Puckett, Jessica Ledbetter, Joy Barlogie, Shelby Morris, Leigha Jones, and Brandy Flowers for the hard work they put in to make it all happen. Discussion ensued.

Welcome Centers are in the process of hiring a new Welcome Center Operations Manager. All Welcome Centers are open and most have returned to community involvement.

Sales participated in a virtual e-sports travel summit in December. The section partnered with Sports Planning Guide magazine to put together the 2021 Arkansas Sports Guide and included it in their December issue.

Communications released the 2021 Travel Guide. Napper read an email to the commissioners from a potential traveler who visited Arkansas.com and was excited about the things he saw; he said no other state travel site compared to Arkansas.com. The Division participated in National Plan for Vacation Day on January 26.

The Department was not awarded the federal economic development grant it applied for. The 2021 Governor's Conference on Tourism is virtual only, March 2-3. The Department has partnered with the Arkansas Hospitality Association on the conference and Jamie Clarke will once again be a featured speaker. Three-hundred and five people have already registered.

Napper presented data showing that Welcome Center visits are down, literature orders have increased, and digital reads remain steady. 2% Tourism Tax collections were down 17% for November but that number is still beating projections by about \$3 million. Napper broke down the collection by Regional Tourist Associations. Discussion ensued.

Smith Travel Research data shows statewide occupancy for hotels was 40.4% for the month of November and 34.8% for December. The average daily rate for hotel occupancy was down slightly for November and December. All consumer spending is up for the year by 10.6% but lodging, entertainment, and recreation were down. Unemployment numbers in the hospitality industry are still slightly down but remain steady. Small business revenue for leisure and hospitality was still quite negative but less than it has been. Discussion ensued.

Napper reviewed the 2% Tourism Tax history with the Commission and how it has impacted the industry. Discussion ensued.

CJRW

Jennifer Morgan updated the Commission that the spring/summer ad placements shared with the advertising committee in November were approved by the Department.

Brian Kratkiewicz presented the spring/summer media strategy. The budget for 2021 is \$3.6 million. The media mix is \$1.6 million for digital which is 46.5% of the budget; \$1.46 million for television which is 40.1% of the budget; \$343k for print which is 9.5% of the budget, and \$1.3k for radio which is 3.8% of the budget. Kratkiewicz elaborated on the media mix by tactics. Digital will be the primary focus and ads will run from April through June on video and mobile. The 2020 summer/fall strategy results went above and beyond the goals set for individuals reached and proved more cost-efficient than projected. CJRW will continue to use programmatic buys for data and research to be more cost-efficient. There will be a blend of mass reach sites for networks and websites. Vertical and niche sites will be those that target outdoors, mountain biking, cycling, hunting, fishing, women's interests, travel, aviation, local Dallas and Arkansas sites, podcasts, and connected TV. With the budget reductions due to COVID, CJRW is looking to concentrate on top performing partners from the last few years with programmatic buying software companies, added mobile support, direct apps and websites and connected TV network platforms.

Television tactics will be traditional in the spring/summer markets. There are strong levels of support in broadcast and cable. There will be a three-week flight of ads to out-of-state markets and in-state markets from March 29 to April 18. This is down slightly due to budget reductions but is a co-op opportunity. Ads will continue to run on the Spanish language television in Little Rock, Northwest Arkansas, and Dallas. Partnerships will continue with the Television Broadcasters Association, Arkansas Cable Telecommunications Association, and the Branson Vacation Channel.

Radio tactics will be covered under in-state and rural metro markets during spring break for three weeks, February 8-28, and then early summer for three weeks, May 9-30.

Print tactics include having a consistent magazine presence that will run from January through June. It is a mix of the same types of magazines that are generally used for regional mass reach publications and the same type of niches that are used for digital media outreach. There will also be a presence in in-state lifestyle and information publications.

Co-op opportunities are available for television through cable for in-state and out-of-state feeder markets and broadcast through the Television Broadcasters Association partnerships. Magazine co-ops are available through a variety of publications and there are new digital co-op opportunities with Pandora and Expedia. Kratkiewicz expounded when different media will run from spring to summer and showed that the added value is around \$1.7 million. There have been reductions in rates, no-charge ad placements, and an extension in ad placement by roughly 47%.

Susie Kardas gave an update on Arkansas.com. Month-over-month total users increased by 21%. Partner referrals increased by 6% and guides ordered increased by 19%. Guides viewed online increased by 26% and newsletter subscriptions decreased by 35%. Kardas reported on the email marketing performance. The open rate needs to stay around 20%. It is currently at 28.4%. The click-to-open rate needs to stay around 10%; it is at 18.3%.

Kardas gave a breakdown of conversions for year-over-year. There was a 40% increase in total users on the site. Partner referrals increased by 11%. Guides ordered online increased by 8% while guides viewed online decreased by 12%. Newsletter subscriptions decreased by 35%. Kardas stated that the goal for 2021 is to get the conversion rate up. The conversion rate for 2019 was 11.77% and in 2020 was 7.47%. The COVID impact on the website industry traffic was down just a little less than 1%. Arkansas's traffic is up compared to the rest of the nation. Arkansas.com had an increase in traffic of 21% while the industry as a whole had a decrease of 0.41%. There was a 40% increase in organic traffic May – July. Organic social media traffic, particularly Facebook, saw an increase of 127%; there was a 258% increase in paid Facebook sessions. Restaurants and accommodations are still seeing a decrease in traffic.

Chris Ho and Keegan Wright delivered the report on social media insights for November and December. Google and Bing saw an increase overall in clicks, conversions, and conversion rates; the spend was decreased slightly. Social media performance focused on college students and the Arkansas Trail of Holiday Lights. The website metrics have increased year-over-year.

Parks Division

Parks Committee Report

Commissioner Eric Jackson reported the Parks Committee met on January 27, 2021. ASP positive developments reported that 2020 was a great year in parks; Arkansans are taking advantage of their parks more this year than in years past. With COVID, visitors are looking for safe, healthy, and outdoor things to do; parks have been slammed with guests. The Petit Jean State Park Visitor Center is now open with a dedication to be held at a future date. The Cedar Creek Bridge is being replaced; that has become a true engineering challenge. Parks anticipate having the bridge open by spring break. The parking lots and campsites at Hobbs State Park-Conservation Area are now open. ASP was awarded almost \$1.2 million in grants for a couple of projects. A recently published book written about the ASP parks system was written by Kelby Taylor and features a dog named Beau and his family. "Beau Goes to the Arkansas State Parks" was written about their adventures while visiting all 52 parks during 2020.

Commissioner Jackson commented the negative developments include staffing issues while the parks are being slammed with high visitation. Governor Hutchison announced the unemployment rate is down to 4.9% which is lower than before COVID started and this has resulted in a small labor pool. As a result, park staff has had to close some facilities due to lack of staffing. Arkansas State Parks (ASP) financials are doing better than anticipated with park staff managing expenses. Parks are \$300,000 better off than last year and \$1 million better than two years ago. Another positive sign is that ASP has \$6 million in future reservations.

Commissioner Jackson remarked the quarterly construction update for the Amendment 75-1/8 cent tax has enabled ASP to take a park system that was in bad shape 24 years ago and turn it into one of the best in the country and one of the few state park systems that does not charge entrance fees. This entire program has resulted in about \$200 million of improvements in the parks. The operations team manages the major maintenance part of the program with \$3 million and 250-275 projects for this year. Amendment 75 has also resulted in about \$35 million for park major maintenance projects. Commissioner John Gill specifically thanked ASP for their construction projects and maintenance of the parks.

Commissioner Jackson stated First Day Hikes is a national program and while some states canceled First Day Hikes due to COVID, ASP went virtual to allow guests to continue their first day hike traditions.

Commissioner Jackson commented a couple of property acquisitions that are in progress. The Arkansas State Parks E-Newsletter was discussed, which currently has 115,000 subscribers. In conclusion, with the increased park visitation and the number of calls they handle, Law Enforcement and Life Safety is doing remarkable work.

Director's Report

Shea Lewis commented on the total impact of Amendment 75 with the capital improvement projects, major maintenance projects, and a portion that also goes toward operations. ASP is grateful to have Amendment 75.

Arkansas Broadcasters Association Agreement renewal

Shea Lewis reported on the nearly 30-year public private partnership with the Arkansas Broadcasters Association (ABA) promoting the diverse facilities and activities of the state park system. ASP pays \$75,000 with a return of investment of 15 to 1, for the value of \$300,000 back in radio and television promotions. Shea Lewis requested renewal of the agreement for one year. Discussion ensued.

Shash Goyal moved to approve the renewal of the partnership between Arkansas State Parks and the Arkansas Broadcasters Association for one year. Jim Shamburger seconded, and the motion carried.

Arkansas Press Association Agreement renewal

Shea Lewis reported that the agreement with APA began in 1988 and inspired Arkansas pride in the state park system, encouraging Arkansans to travel in-state and visit other Arkansas travel destinations. ASP agrees to pay \$75,000 and for every ad placed, they receive one ad of the same value for free. Lewis requested renewal of the agreement for one year.

Eric Jackson moved to approve the renewal of the partnership between Arkansas State Parks and the Arkansas Press Association for one year. Weston Lewey seconded, and the motion carried.

DeGray Lake Resort State Park Horseback Ride concession renewal

Shea Lewis reported that Ray Lovett has had a successful horseback riding concession at DeGray Lake Resort State Park since 2007. Lewis requested approval to renew the operating agreement for five years with ASP receiving 10% of the gross income of the concession. Discussion followed.

Bob Connell moved to approve the renewal of the operating agreement between Arkansas State Parks and Ray Lovett, horseback concessionaire, for a term of five years. Eric Jackson seconded, and the motion carried.

Skycrest Lease Mount Magazine State Park

Shea Lewis reported the Skycrest, Inc. lease to Mt. Magazine State Park permits the sale of alcoholic beverages in the Skycrest Restaurant, Bear's Den, and Lodge conference facilities. By management contract, the non-profit gives back to ADPHT the rights to run the banquet facility and restaurant to include the sale of alcoholic beverages. Shea Lewis requested approval of the agreement renewal. Discussion followed.

Jim Shamburger moved to approve the lease renewal agreement with Skycrest, Inc. for the sale of alcoholic beverages at the banquet facility and restaurant at Mt. Magazine State Park. Mike Gibson seconded, and the motion carried.

Queen Wilhelmina State Park Concessionaire

Shea Lewis reported the Morning Glory Train, miniature golf, and snack bar concession agreement is due for renewal. Lewis requested approval to renew the operating agreement with the same terms and conditions with ASP receiving 10% of the gross income of the concession with a minimum of \$5,500. Discussion ensued. Jim Andrews stated a lease implies possessory rights; however, a concessionaire license agreement does not infer or imply possessory rights to the concessionaire and is subject to revocation at the will of the grantor. Andrews advised ASP to go back to the concessionaire and advise them of the SPRTC recommendation for a one-year license agreement with changes to be approved by the SPRTC.

John Gill moved to table the renewal request for the Mountain Glory Train concession at Queen Wilhelmina State Park until the February State Parks, Recreation and Travel commission meeting. Eric Jackson seconded, and the motion carried.

Sturgis Veterans Plaza and sculpture donation (WMS Improvement Trust)

Shea Lewis reported the War Memorial Stadium (WMS) Improvement Trust was established in 1997 primarily to receive donations from private entities who sought to assist with the improvements of the stadium. With Arkansas Park and Recreation Foundation (APRF) and with the stadium being a part of the Arkansas Parks, Heritage and Tourism Department, WMS Improvement Trust decided to dissolve as it is no longer needed. The WMS Investment Trust donated all existing funds to WMS and would convey the responsibility for Sturgis Veteran's Plaza and the sculpture to the care of the War Memorial Stadium Commission. Discussion ensued.

Petit Jean State Park – Approval of resolution supporting State Airport Aid Grant application

Jeff King reported following meetings and discussions with Jerry Chism, Director of the Arkansas Division of Aeronautics, the Operations, and Planning & Development Sections gathered quotes for improvements identified as "grant eligible" projects at Petit Jean State Park Airport (MPJ):

- Installation of a new ingress/egress gate with keypad entry \$12,900.
- Improvements to fueling system to meet branding requirements \$54,547.

- Campground bathhouse improvements and minor renovations (exterior stain/paint; on-demand hot water; LED lighting package; & keypad entry) \$8,122.

The State Aeronautics Commission, which authorizes grants administered by the Arkansas Department of Commerce – Division of Aeronautics, considers requests for State Airport Aid funding monthly. With the support of the State Parks, Recreation, and Travel Commission (SPRTC), ASP's goal is to submit a State Airport Aid funding request for a 90/10 grant for the above-mentioned improvements. Based on the above estimates for the listed project at MPJ, \$68,012 would be funded by the Division of Aeronautics, with \$7,557 being the responsibility of the Division of State Park (total projects \$75,569). The 90/10 State Airport Aid funding is available for eligible projects up to \$166,667 (up to \$150,000 in grant funding).

Arkansas State Parks is required to submit resolutions from the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission (SPRTC) expressing their support for the projects and providing assurance that funding will be available to support the projects of this grant opportunity at the Arkansas Department of Commerce - Division of Aeronautics upcoming meeting on January 28, 2021.

John Gill moved to approve the Arkansas Department of Commerce - Division of Aeronautics Resolution, to express full support from the State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission for the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism to submit a grant application seeking State Airport Aid grant funding.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Arkansas State Parks, Recreation, and Travel Commission and the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism, State Parks Division (Grantee) understands that State Airport Aid funds are available at ninety percent (90%) Arkansas Department of Commerce – Division of Aeronautics (Grantor) participation and ten percent (10%) local match to develop or improve the Petit Jean State Park Airport, and

WHEREAS, the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism, State Parks Division, understands that State Airport Aid funds are available for this project on a reimbursable basis, requiring work to be accomplished and proof of payment prior to actual monetary reimbursement, and

WHEREAS, the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism, State Parks Division, understands and agrees that the Grantee shall commence any State Airport Aid funded project immediately upon award of a grant, with said project to be completed within one year from the date of acceptance of a grant by the Grantee, and

WHEREAS, the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism, State Parks Division, understands and agrees that no land, hangars, or buildings purchased with State Airport Aid funds may be sold or disposed of without prior approval by the State Aeronautics Commission.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Arkansas State Parks, Recreation, and Travel Commission, that:

Section I: The Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism, State Parks Division, will participate in accordance with its designated responsibility, including maintenance of a State Airport Aid funded project.

Section II: The Arkansas State Parks, Recreation, and Travel Commission, pledges its full support and hereby authorizes the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism, State Parks Division, to cooperate with the Arkansas Department of Commerce – Division of Aeronautics to initiate actions to implement a State Airport Aid funded project.

THIS RESOLUTION adopted by the State Parks, Recreation, and Travel Commission on this 28th day of January 2021.

**ARKANSAS STATE PARKS, RECREATION, AND TRAVEL COMMISSION
/s/Kalene Griffith, Chair
ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF PARKS, HERITAGE AND TOURISM**

Eric Jackson seconded, and the motion carried.

Mount Nebo State Park – Acceptance of completed Monument Trail improvements – Rim Trail Improvements

King stated through a Memorandum of Agreement with Arkansas State Parks, the Arkansas Parks & Recreation Foundation (APRF) has completed improvements to the Rim Trail at Mount Nebo State Park. These improvements included the repair and rebuilding of numerous rock steps and rock armoring, several hundred feet of tread rebuild, and clearing of rockfalls and vegetative debris. The work was undertaken to match the construction techniques utilized by the CCC-era construction crews who first built portions of the Rim Trail. The total value of these improvements is \$67,860.

The previously mentioned Memorandum of Agreement calls for the transfer of exclusive rights and ownership of the projects to Arkansas State Parks, upon completion of the development projects. In conjunction with A.C.A. § 22-4-103, King asked the State Parks, Recreation, and Travel Commission to accept these contributions of the APRF used to improve the state park system. Discussion ensued.

Randy Wolfinbarger moved to formally to accept the gifts of the Arkansas Parks & Recreation Foundation improvements completed at Mount Nebo State Park. Jeff Baskin seconded, and the motion carried.

Jacksonport State Park – Property Removal Request for Seymore House and Storage Building

Jeff King requested permission to remove two structures from the park's inventory.

- Seymore Residence (Building No. 22.38 /AASIS Nos. 120007758) is a 2-bedroom, 1 bath, 1,052 square foot wood-frame residence on a crawl space foundation located on one city lot. The residential structure was constructed in 1964. The residence was acquired in 2019 as part of the 2017 Legacy Update for the viewshed enhancement of the park.
- Seymore Storage Building (Building No. 25.39 /AASIS Nos. 120007760) is a 430 square foot wooden frame storage building. This building is in poor condition and not of any value to the park. Removal is needed for viewshed enhancement of the park.

Both structures are located on Lot 9, in Block 6 of the Original Town of Jacksonport. The buildings will be demolished and disposed of in accordance with all Federal, State, and local regulations.

Mike Gibson moved to approve based on the information presented; the commission finds the following structures at Jacksonport State Park Seymore Residence (Building No. 22.38 /AASIS Nos. 120007758) and Seymore Storage Building (Building No. 25.39 /AASIS Nos. 120007760) are obsolete notwithstanding the insured value and approves the removal from Arkansas State Park inventory. Bob Connell seconded, and the motion carried.

Pinnacle Mountain State Park – Property Removal Request for Pumphouse Building

Jeff King requested permission to remove one structure from the park's inventory. Pumphouse (Building No. 42.01 /AASIS Nos. 120006374) is a 196 square foot concrete cinderblock building with asphalt shingles and concrete floor built in 1979 as a pumphouse to pump water to the visitor center. The park recently added 13-15 miles of new Monument Trails and this structure is located at the head of one of the trails. This area is being turned into a large-scale parking lot and the building is no longer in service nor is it suitable for any other uses within the park. The building will be demolished and disposed of in accordance with all Federal, State, and local regulations.

Jim Shamburger moved to approve based on the information presented; the commission finds the following structures at Pinnacle Mountain State Park the Pumphouse (Building No. 42.01 /AASIS Nos. 120006374) obsolete notwithstanding the insured value and approves the removal from Arkansas State Park inventory. Mike Wilson seconded, and the motion carried.

CJRW / Miles

Danny Czerwinski reported the Arkansas State Parks' website November/December 2019 to November/December 2020 comparison had an 11.6% increase in website traffic, the booking sites click had a 70.8% increase, and 1,350 guides ordered - a 633% increase. There was a 121% increase in the number of times the state park guide was viewed online and a 17.9% increase in the Arkansas.com referrals. Comparing 2019 to 2020 the conversion breakdown year-over-year shows great growth with a 37% increase in website traffic, a 74.5% increase in booking site clicks, a 579% increase in the number of guides ordered, an 102% increase in guides viewed online, and an 18.9% increase in the Arkansas.com referrals. The total traffic and conversion rates has decreased some since September but have balanced out with the conversion rate.

Czerwinski reported on the user location breakdown from January to December 2019 - 22% in-state and 78% out-of-state. When compared to January to December 2020 - 25% in-state and 75% out-of-state. The views on the park's accommodation pages have increased since May and continue to stay strong and exceed 2019 levels. On the ASP event page with the COVID-19 restrictions the page views continue to be lower than the pre-COVID-19 page views. Czerwinski stated until the restrictions from COVID-19 are lifted they do not anticipate these numbers to improve. The Digital Discovery webpage had 28,766 page views from March through December with an average stay time of 3 minutes and 34 seconds; this stay time average is very impressive and well above average. The engaging digital content is bridging the gap between 2019 and 2020 due to the lost traffic on the events page and shows visitors are still interested in state parks. The website traffic from organic search has stayed strong in 2020. Discussion ensued.

Old Business/New Business

Secretary Stacy Hurst thanked SPRTC who answered the call or text to reach out to their legislators this morning we appreciate your support.

Secretary Hurst informed SPRTC that the APRF has reached out to ASP to talk about a public art initiative; essentially placing public art in the state parks. The APRF has shared a draft agreement with ASP which has been reviewed by Jim Andrews. Secretary Hurst stated she knows that this is a big move and art can sometimes be controversial and requested SPRTC review the agreement and provide feedback. The public art initiative could be a positive asset for Arkansas. Discussion ensued.

Commissioner John Gill stated the current issue of *AY Magazine* article, "Dark Skies, Strange Clouds" mentioned Commissioner Austin Albers. Gill stated Arkansas is well positioned to promote clear skies. Discussion followed.

Commissioner Mike Gibson mentioned Kaleen Griffith was named one of the Power Women for 2020 in the December 2020 issue of *Arkansas Money and Politics*. Gibson also mentioned *Arkansas Money and Politics*, January 2021, has an article "Arkansas Tourism Surviving Pandemic Punch," and an interview "Stacy Hurst: For Tourism, 2020 Was Better Than Expected."

The meeting adjourned at 1:45 p.m.

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