

Minutes
State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission
August 15-16, 2002
Fort Smith Holiday Inn City Center
Fort Smith, Arkansas

Commissioners Present

Debbie Haak, Chairman
Bill Barnes
Polly Wood Crews
Montine McNulty
Mike Mills
Ness Sechrest
Wade Williams

Billy Lindsey, Vice Chairman, Thursday only
Jane Christenson
Danny Ford
Loretta Lever House
Ted Mullenix
J.D. "Bud" Shamburger

Commissioners Absent

Jim Gaston

Department Staff Present

Richard W. Davies, Executive Director
Joe David Rice, Tourism Director
Greg Butts, State Parks Director
Nancy Clark, Assistant Tourism Director
Mac Balkman, Manager, Operations
Stan Graves, Manager, Planning & Development
Barbara Wilson, Dora TIC Manager
Ron Gossage, Superintendent, Lake Ft. Smith State Park
Jessee Cox, Superintendent, Devil's Den State Park
Gloria Robins, Executive Assistant
Jennifer Carson, Administrative Assistant
Sandy Burch, Administrative Assistant

Agency Staff Present

Shelby Woods

Karen Mullikin

Aristotle

Marla Johnson Norris
Dina Crane

Jonathan Eudy
Jennifer Peper

Guests Present

Marynell Branch, Governor's Office
Col. Benjamin H. Butler, District Engineer, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Little Rock District
Col. Frederick Clapp, District Commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Vicksburg District
Bob Hobgood, Chief Operations Division, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Vicksburg District
Joe Woods, Chief Project Resources, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Vicksburg District
Brenda Meeks, Ouachita Project Manager, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Vicksburg District
James Ross, Chief Flood Control, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Vicksburg District
Peggy O'Bryan, Operations Manager, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Vicksburg District
Edward Watford, Deputy District Engineer, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Little Rock District
Terry Cook, Best Western Inn of the Ozarks, Eureka Springs
Marilyn Johnson, Fayetteville Town Center
Steve Arrison, Hot Springs Convention & Visitors Bureau
Jed Bullock, Best Western Inn of the Ozarks, Eureka Springs
Barbara King-Dozier, Eureka Springs Visitors Bureau
Lynn Berry, Eureka Springs Visitors Bureau
Marnel Bland, The Great Passion Play
Don Loudermilk, Eureka Springs Advertising & Promotion Committee
Pam Jones, Pine Bluff Convention & Visitors Bureau
Allyson Twiggs, Fayetteville Convention & Visitors Bureau
Barry Travis, Little Rock Convention & Visitors Bureau
Bob Purvis, Pine Bluff Convention & Visitors Bureau
Maryl Koeth, Van Buren Advertising & Promotion Commission
Peggy Weidman, Ft. Smith
Kelley Linck, Ozark Mountain Region Tourist Association
Brian Clark, Sells & Clark
Michael Clark, Sells & Clark
Clifford Ferguson, Poet

Call to Order

Chairman Debbie Haak called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and Gloria Robins called the roll.

Approval of the Agenda

Jane Christenson moved to approve the agenda. Danny Ford seconded and the motion carried.

Presentation of Minutes from previous Meeting

Jane Christenson moved to approve the minutes. Montine McNulty seconded and the motion carried.

Financial Report

Larry Cargile presented the financial report for the month of July, 2002, the first month of the new fiscal year.

Mr. Cargile pointed out that expenditures this year compared to last fiscal year are greater. The reason for this is that this time last year there were problems in determining how to pay vendors in the new AASIS system, therefore, those expenditures were not reported. The Parks Division July expenditures, including construction/grants, totaled \$3,212,182, or 6% of annual budget. Tourism Division expenditures totaled \$1,188,104, or 10% of annual budget. Keep Arkansas Beautiful expenditures were \$11,584, or 2% of budget. Administration Division expenditures totaled \$188,747, or 87% of budget. History Commission expenditures were \$141,963, or 11% of budget. Total Department expenditures - \$4,742,850 or 7% of annual budget.

Ness Sechrest moved to approve the financial report. Wade Williams seconded and the motion carried.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Presentation by Mr. Clifford Ferguson

Richard Davies introduced Mr. Clifford Ferguson, a poet from Decatur, who has received awards for poetry he has written. Mr. Ferguson read a poem he had written entitled, *Arkansas* and presented a framed copy to the Commission.

Arkansas

Ar'Kansas as some would say,
Meaning Arkan'Saw to those who live in Evening Shade.
Yet with the baptismal name,
Of which gave its fame.
It is the most charming state I ever saw.

The ability of four seasons,
Beauty of change without reason.
Gives an artistic picture,
Of no view I know richer.

From the capitol of Little Rock,
Beauty to see on each block.
To the luscious green hill sides of Mountain Home,
saying with a friendly smile Welcome Home.

To the joy's of Jasper, near the Buffalo River,

Where one can find nature to always remember.
As the great elk can be seen to often roam,
Some say they have called it their home.

With the Bald Eagles flying wild and free,
Leaving Home of the Razorbacks in your dreams,
Truly a Great State this must be,
And to love its beauty you must see!

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Col. Butler, Little Rock District, and Col. Clapp, Vicksburg District, gave an overview of the history of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Col. Clapp said the Mission of the Corps includes flood control, the generation of hydro-electric power, recreation and homeland security. Col. Clapp detailed the work the Corps is doing along the Arkansas River in cooperation with the Arkansas Game & Fish Commission with the goal of improving fish habitat. He discussed the effects this year's flooding has had on Corps recreation areas and the problems they are having making repairs as a result of cut-backs in funding for these areas. The National Recreation Reservation System (NRRS) began taking reservations for Corps campgrounds four years ago. Though there have been problems with the system, Col. Clapp said improvements are being made and the system is getting better. Next year the Corps will move to making 60% of its campsites reservable through the NRRS system. Safety is a big concern of the Corps. Col. Butler discussed the efforts the Corps is making in educating the public of the need to always wear a life preserver while boating. He gave statistics on the number of drownings that occur each year and the fact that most of the victims were not wearing life vests. Again discussing funding, Col. Butler said that funding has been flat. He said not enough money is received in the state to repair the damage caused by flooding and ice storms. The campgrounds have outdated facilities with campsites not being able to accommodate the size and electrical requirements of today's recreational vehicles. Funding to update the sites is unavailable. The focus is on keeping campgrounds safe enough to keep them open to the public. Col. Butler added that they are looking at closing campgrounds in October rather than the scheduled November and December dates. The Corps is also not able, because of lack of funding, to control the unwanted growth of aquatic vegetation in lakes, and to do the necessary mowing in and around recreation areas. Cols. Butler and Clapp stressed the value and importance of the Corps' partnership with Arkansas State Parks.

Richard Davies noted that the condition of Corps campgrounds is where Arkansas State Parks' campgrounds were before the passage of the 1/8¢ Conservation Tax. Mr. Davies said Corps personnel are prevented, by law, from lobbying. He noted that the Corps has 70% of the campsites in the state of Arkansas. By the Corps' own numbers the economic impact of recreation is actually greater than navigation and hydro-power but it can't manage to get funding

for recreation. Mr. Davies asked what the Commission could do to help the Corps improve its budget in recreational maintenance and upgrading, and what time each year are budgets planned. Col. Clapp said that navigation, hydro-power and flood control have organizations that promote these activities with state authorities and the administration in Washington. Recreation has more direct contact with the public than any other Corps function. Col. Clapp said there is not a decades old organization to promote its interest in recreation with Congress as it goes through the budget cycle every year. Col. Butler added that the Corps has bosses on the Army side but funding comes from Congress. An issue now in Congress is national security and that is having an effect on funding. Richard Davies asked which committee the SPRTC can contact. Col. Butler responded that it is the House Energy & Water Sub-Committee. Billy Lindsey asked if it is correct that all the fees that are collected within the system go back to general revenues. Col. Butler said that is correct. Mr. Lindsey asked if there was a time in Corps history that it was able to retain those fees, and if that was re-established, how much impact would it have on the Corps' ability to do some of the things that need to be done. Col. Butler said that at one time Greers Ferry Lake was the largest collector of user fees. It generates several million dollars of user fees that now goes to the Treasury and not back to the District. He said that Senator Blanche Lincoln has introduced a bill that says the collected fees will be returned to the district from which they came. Col. Clapp said the lake recreation area user fees in his district generate \$1.5 million annually. Billy Lindsey said one of the things the Commission could do that would have an impact would be to contact Sen. Lincoln to say there is concern for this legislation and its importance. Col. Clapp said there just needs to be assurance that it would not be used as an offset to the regular budget, that it would be an addition to it. Bill Barnes said it is critical that the user fees go back to the Corps. Mr. Barnes asked to whom the Commission should talk. Richard Davies said he believes Sen. Lincoln's Bill says without offset.

Regarding the NRRS, Bill Barnes said it started off unpleasantly but a lot of effort was brought into it to make the system work better. Mr. Barnes said he understands that a large portion of the reservation fee collected goes to the system operator and not a lot of the money stays in the Corps. He asked if there was any possibility of re-visiting the percentages. Mr. Barnes said there is a very strong local sentiment that the reservation system is not working in the best interests of most people. Col. Clapp responded that the system is mandated. Joe Wood said the mandate is that 60% of Corps campsites must be in the reservable category and it cannot be controlled at the district level. Richard Davies said that Marynell Branch from the Governor's Office delivered to him petitions containing 500 signatures from Lake Greeson asking that the percentage of reservable campsites be lowered. Joe Woods said that kind of input can be made known in Washington to see if there is any chance for relief. Bill Barnes asked if the 60/40 split mandated from headquarters is because a minimum number of sites have to be in the NRRS system per the contract with the provider. Joe Woods said the decisions are made at the national level because in order to make the system work 60% of the campsites must be reservable, and that is in the contract the Corps signed with NRRS. Bill Barnes asked how much of a camping fee is paid to NRRS. Joe Woods said it is \$8 for each reservation made. Ness Sechrest asked the length of the contract with NRRS. Mr. Woods said he believes it expires in 2007. Danny Ford said he thinks it is a great idea for the Commission to back the Corps and work together to see if something could be done. Mr. Ford said we need to inform our Congressmen how important it is

to the state of Arkansas. Debbie Haak asked if the Commission's voice would mean anything in trying to have changes made with the reservation system. Col. Clapp said he thinks it would carry a lot of weight. Ms. Haak asked who should be contacted. Col. Clapp said it would be General Griffin, Chief Engineer in Washington. Billy Lindsey asked what is the average cost of a Corps campsite. Col. Clapp said \$15 - \$16 per day.

Bill Barnes said the Corps does so many things very well and so much of it is taken for granted. Mr. Barnes said he hopes that commanding officers and Congress can be made to understand that recreation is politically powerful. Col. Clapp said his leadership is aware of the problem and is not minimizing the issues the Corps faces in the recreation arena but there are many more issues, too. Col. Butler cited problems such as Army personnel still living in quonset huts in Korea with outdoor bathroom facilities. We are trying to balance those types of needs with recreation. Col. Butler said all of the needs are important, there is just not enough money, in general. He said it is a balancing act for the Corps. Wade Williams asked for ideas on how the SPRTC can help now. Col. Clapp said he feels the Corps and the Department work very well together and can continue to raise recognition of the recreation needs. Debbie Haak said the trips to Washington DC are always rushed. Ms. Haak suggested the Commission could meet with our Congressmen in Arkansas, if that could be arranged. Richard Davies said that is a good idea but it would be a problem with scheduling everyone to meet at the same time. Mr. Davies said we would need to get with the Congressmen's scheduling staff. Mr. Davies asked what month would be the best time during the budgeting process to discuss these problems. Col. Clapp responded it would be in March for the October 1st budget. He said that is when the process is started. Richard Davies said if a Congressman was able to meet on a specific date, could the Corps, from both districts, be represented. Col. Clapp said yes. Ms. Haak said she would like to see all the Congressmen together at the same time. Mr. Davies said he feels that would be nearly impossible. He said he thinks it would be better to have four meetings or six instead of trying to arrange one meeting. Col. Clapp suggested it might be easier if a meeting was tied in with an event, such as a dedication. Jane Christenson asked if the Corps has a schedule of events. Col. Butler said they will get to work on that and inform Debbie Haak. Montine McNulty said it is a good idea to have these meetings but it must be an ongoing effort. Richard Davies said it will help the Commissioners if they knew who to tell Arkansas Congressmen they need to see in Washington and what other states have similar problems so they can link up with the Congressional representation from those states. Bill Barnes asked if the Corps would prefer to have a reservation system run at the district level. Col. Clapp said at the national level but run differently. He said a national system benefits travelers from other states because they know they will have a site when they arrive, and it actually increases the number of campers. Debbie Haak said she appreciated that the Corps attended the Commission meeting and would like to meet again, perhaps annually. Montine McNulty asked if any of the Arkansas Congressmen do more for the Corps than others. Col. Butler said it varies depending on the subject. Bill Hobgood cited examples of how much impact local people, such as the SPRTC, can have on Congress, the budgeting process and allocations. Peggy O'Bryan, who has been with the Corps over twenty years, said she has been in Arkansas only four months and has never been in a state where she has seen such tremendous partnerships.

September Commission Meeting/Service Awards Dinner

Richard Davies said the September meeting will be held at DeGray Lake Resort State Park. The annual advertising presentation will take place during the meeting and on Thursday night the Staff Appreciation and Service Awards Dinner will be held.

Future Meeting with the Arkansas Game & Fish Commission (AGFC)

Richard Davies said the joint sponsorship with AGFC of the legislative reception is scheduled for February. Mr. Davies suggested the February SPRTC meeting could be held on a Wednesday and Thursday and the Commission could meet with AGFC on Tuesday.

Miscellaneous

Richard Davies said Governor Huckabee is very supportive of ADPT. As an example, the Governor had a Cabinet meeting to discuss the West Nile Virus and representatives of the department were invited. Governor Huckabee said during the Cabinet meeting that the reason ADPT was invited is because of all their customers. Mr. Davies called the Commissioners' attention to a print out of the Governor's August 10 radio address in which he talked about the importance of the 1/8¢ Conservation Tax and what it does for state parks. A tape from a television spot was run in which Governor Huckabee announced the new TICs in El Dorado and Ft. Smith.

PARKS DIVISION

Daisy State Park - Removal of Structure from Inventory

Stan Graves said plans are underway for renovation of the Area E campground. A part of the renovation will include the replacement of a deteriorated bathhouse that does not meet ADA standards. The 472 sq. ft. structure was originally constructed as a pit toilet and was renovated as a water borne facility in 1973. Mr. Graves requested approval to remove the structure from inventory.

Mike Mills moved to approve removal of a bathhouse, Building #13.08, from inventory at Daisy State Park. Danny Ford seconded and the motion carried.

Bill Barnes asked the schedule for the renovation. Mr. Graves said he is hoping to avoid interfering with next spring's camping season. He said it will begin mid-summer next year and it will take about four months.

Lake Chicot State Park - Removal of Structure from Inventory

Greg Butts reported that on August 10 a fire occurred in the Marina Park Store. It started

in the storage area of the building and the building was a total loss. The building was insured for \$92,107, contents for \$75,000 for a total coverage of \$167,000 with a deductible of \$25,000. Mr. Butts said an investigation is underway and at this time it is suspected that the fire was the result of an electrical short in the walls between the store and the marina storage room. Mr. Butts said the long range plan that had been approved for the park includes moving the Marina Park Store to the lake shore. Because the building was a total loss, Mr. Butts requested approval to remove the structure from inventory. He said he will come back to the Commission with a plan for replacement of the building, but in the meantime park staff has moved the operation to an old laundry building.

Jane Christenson moved to approve removing from inventory at Lake Chicot State Park the Marina Park Store, Building #11.04. Montine McNulty seconded and the motion carried.

Bill Barnes asked if the decision had been made between moving it closer to the lake or actually on the water. Greg Butts said not at this time, but the staff's preference is on the water because that is where most of the business is generated. It is yet to be determined if there is enough real estate to locate the facility on land and provide access to the docks and fuel service and parking. Mr. Butts said the Commission had asked that both options be considered.

Mike Mills said he is concerned about safety and asked if there is an inspection process that could have prevented this fire. Greg Butts said it is an older structure that was built in 1974 and park staff are responsible for maintaining facilities. Mr. Butts said that at this point no one knows the cause of the fire. Mr. Mills said the fire is a reminder that there may need to be closer inspections of facilities. Mr. Butts said Mac Balkman and park staff would go over all of the issues related to the fire and report their findings to the Commission.

Lake Dardanelle State Park - Grant Request

Stan Graves said a grant in an amount up to \$100,000 is available from the Sport Fishing and Boating Safety Act of 1998 through the Arkansas Game & Fish Commission. The funds would be granted on a 75% federal/25% local basis with the 25% coming from the 1/8¢ Conservation funds. The grant guidelines state the funds are to be used to construct a courtesy dock for transient, non-trailerable vessels over 26 feet in length. It has been the plan to construct a courtesy dock between the new Visitor Information/Education Center and the new Tournament Fishing Weigh-In Pavilion at Lake Dardanelle State Park. Should the grant be awarded, the funds would be used to construct this dock. Mr. Graves asked approval to submit a grant proposal and use 1/8¢ funds for the match.

Montine McNulty moved to approve submitting a proposal to the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission for the purpose of building a courtesy dock at Lake Dardanelle State Park with 1/8¢ Conservation Tax funds being used for the 25% matching funds. Bill Barnes seconded and the motion carried.

Proposed CY2003 Fees & Rates

Greg Butts said over the years, Jim Gaston had asked that the Commission be provided with a revenue/expense breakdown on the lodge operations and selected campsites, and to address depreciation as one would in the private sector. Chris Peek, Mac Balkman and park staff assembled that information for the Commission's review. Included in the reports is a proportionate share of all the related costs from our Department and the Department of Finance & Administration. Therefore, if one wants to know what the true costs are for providing the subject services, the report provides that information.

Mr. Butts said that this is the meeting the Commission tentatively approves the proposed CY2003 Fees and Rates. The September meeting will be the public hearing and a final decision will be made by the Commission. Mr. Butts reminded the Commissioners that at the previous month's meeting they had asked for information on 50-amp electrical service available in our campgrounds. At this time there are 55 campsites that offer 50-amp service. Mr. Butts added that as campgrounds are renovated, all sites will have 50-amp service. During the next year, campground areas that will be renovated are Village Creek, Daisy, Lake Ouachita, Petit Jean and Devil's Den. The renovation also includes sewer hook-up where possible. Sandy Burch did some research to determine who is adding an additional charge for 50-amp service. Oklahoma is adding an additional \$1 and is talking about raising that fee next year. Texas adds an additional \$3 to \$5 for the service, where the rate is dependent on the location and popularity of the park. Mr. Butts said these pieces of information would help us in our discussions. Private campgrounds charge an additional \$3 to \$5 for 50-amp service.

Regarding the monthly rate for small craft covered marina slips at DeGray, Mr. Butts said he wanted to increase the rate to \$90, identical to the rate at Lake Ouachita. Chris Snodgrass, Superintendent at DeGray, is concerned about an increase due to the fact that there are vacancies at both Iron Mountain and DeGray. Mr. Butts said his revised recommendation is that the 2002 price be retained for 2003, and an effort be made to advertise the availability of the slips at DeGray. Regarding the Ozark Folk Center, Mr. Butts said the rates for the craft ground and the music shows have remained the same for four years. Considering the increasing costs for performers and crafters, a recommendation is made to raise individual craft and music tickets by \$1, the combination ticket by \$2 for adults and \$1 for children, and the three-day combination ticket \$5 for adults and \$4.75 for children. Greg Butts said pedal boat rentals are being added at Lake Frierson. The proposal is that the price be the same as for the pedal boat rental at Crowley's Ridge -- \$4.50 per hour, \$3.50 per half hour.

Ted Mullenix asked for clarification on the varying occupancy rates in camping parks and the costs for the campsite. Greg Butts said the sites at Bull Shoals are larger and because it is on the White River, the demand is greater. At Devil's Den the sites are smaller. Regarding the comparison of costs, it varies dependent on the number of park staff, salaries for the staff, the total park operation and related effect on indirect costs. Bull Shoals-White River has more visitation. Richard Davies said the key is that because the occupancy is so high, all the overhead costs are spread thinner between rented sites. Therefore, at 80% occupancy it is about half of the

other parks that are running at 29% to 48%. Ness Sechrest expressed concern at the low occupancy rates for DeGray lodge. Greg Butts said some of what we suffered from was as a result of the attack on Sept. 11, 2001 and a “softening” of the economy. However, this June was 8% to 9% over the previous June in revenues. Mr. Butts said it is not where it needs to be and he knows business has been lost. DeGray has 96 rooms and Petit Jean has 24 rooms – so there are fewer rooms to fill and camping occupancy statistics should take these differences into account. The Ozark Folk Center has 60 rooms; Queen Wilhelmina has 38 so from the standpoint of trying to fill 38 rooms vs. trying to fill 96, it is a different situation. Chris Snodgrass reported that several groups canceled after September 11, 2001. Mr. Butts said he is not making excuses for a reduction in occupancy and DeGray needs to improve their numbers. When one is looking at occupancy rates, consideration needs to be given to how many rooms there are to fill at a certain location.

Bill Barnes said one of the issues that was discussed the previous month was the value of a site that has been enhanced with 50-amp service coupled with an increase in expense. The analysis Sandy Burch did shows that some states increase their rates. Mr. Barnes said he thinks the cost of the sites need to be increased. The justification is it is an enhanced service and an enhanced expense. Mr. Barnes asked Greg Butts what increase he would be comfortable with. Mr. Butts said he feels there is a reason to increase the rate but the concern he has is that seniors will pay half the increase if it is an electrical charge. An increase will have to be built into the retail price. Mac Balkman said several years ago an electrical meter was installed at one of the sites at Bull Shoals in one of the heavily used areas in order to get an accurate idea on the cost of electricity at a site. In June, which is a high occupancy month at Bull Shoals, the cost for electricity at that site was \$1.98 per day. Richard Davies said with an additional electric charge, campers will argue for proof on how much electricity could be used. Mr. Davies said if there is a charge for a 50-amp site, it should be a charge for 50-amp service whether it is used or not. Ness Sechrest asked how much could we increase the fees on one of those sites. Bud Shamburger said \$3 to \$5 because that is what is happening in the private sector. Bill Barnes said his proposal is to raise the rate \$5. Bud Shamburger said that is too much, \$3 is in line. Mike Mills said \$3.50 would make the site cost \$25.00. Debbie Haak asked Greg what he wants. Mr. Butts said in reviewing what others charge, \$3.00 would be as far as he would recommend for the upcoming year. Stan Graves said one thing to keep in mind that in addition to upgrading sites to offer 50-amp service, sewer hook-ups are being constructed where possible. Therefore, with whatever one assessed as the value of a sewer hook-up, it may go up quite a bit. Richard Davies said a full hook-up (water, sewer and electric) is now \$21.50, so adding the \$3 it would be \$24.50, or it could be rounded up to \$25.00. Bud Shamburger said a full hook-up site in a private park is \$28.00. Greg Butts said we have to consider how our rates compare to other public areas. Debbie Haak said if we keep adding a cost to every campsite we improve, we may be perceived as asking campers to pay for improvements funded by A-75. Mike Mills said he disagrees – we are asking them to pay for the additional cost to operate. The 1/8¢ installed the new sewer line and added the new 50-amp service, but it is going to cost more to operate the site because of higher water treatment and electrical costs.

Danny Ford moved to increase by \$3.00 the rate for a campsite that offers 50-amp service. Mike Mills seconded and the motion carried.

Bill Barnes asked Greg Butts to consider the slip rental at DeGray be \$79/month as opposed to \$75/month, and discuss it with Chris Snodgrass.

Bill Barnes moved to accept the rate proposals as presented by staff for the Ozark Folk Center and Lake Frierson State Parks. Jane Christenson seconded and the motion carried.

Bud Shamburger asked if campsite fees during peak periods will be addressed in the research Greg Butts is conducting. Mr. Shamburger said we are missing revenue opportunities by not pricing campsites at peak times. Now that school is back in session, Friday and Saturday nights are peak times. In Hot Springs it is the same thing – when you book a room in Hot Springs now, the weekend rate will be higher. Mr. Shamburger said campsite rates could be increased by \$10 on Friday and Saturday nights. Greg Butts said if campsites were priced at \$31.50 they would not be geared for Arkansans. Debbie Haak said there is a difference between state parks and private business. One of the issues with state parks is people are paying taxes for state parks. Mr. Shamburger said that we are taking the tax money and building very nice facilities that must be maintained, we have to hire qualified staff, and we have to have a first-class reservation system. Mr. Shamburger said state park camping fees are undercutting the private sector. Bill Barnes said he thinks Mr. Shamburger is correct. If we are going to be expected to continue to enhance facilities and services, and maintain them as years go by, we can't rely entirely on the 1/8¢ funds to cover all those things. Mr. Barnes said one of the things we can look at is a peak season price, if not now then at some point in the future. We are not trying to over charge people; we are just trying to run the system prudently. Bud Shamburger said we have an unlimited source of financing. We take this unlimited source of financing and build first-class facilities and if we rent them for less than what the private sector is renting theirs for, we are going to be criticized. And the private sector does not have an unlimited source of financing. Polly Wood Crews said that the first charge of the SPRTC is to ensure accessibility to our citizens. Mr. Shamburger said that the private sector prices their product based on demand. If the demand is greatest on the weekends, they get more for weekends. Polly Wood Crews said she feels like the first charge is to keep our pricing within the range of the average person. Wade Williams said he thinks this is along the lines of the discussion the previous month about how to structure rates and whether or not we should be doing some peak season pricing. Polly Wood Crews said at some time we need to discuss our mission and in what direction we are going and how we all feel about it.

Village Creek State Park - Lodge & Golf Course

Greg Butts reminded the Commission of its direction to pursue the possibility with a private partnership to establish and operate a golf course and a lodge. The deadline for submittals for the RFP/RFQ was July 31. Sixty-seven packets of information were sent out in response to inquiries received. Unfortunately, to this point only one submittal was received and it was from a design firm that was very interested in the project but for a fee. Mr. Butts said the plan is to send out a brief questionnaire to those firms that were sent information to try to determine what we might do to help enhance the viability of the project. Since January when the Commission approved this action, Mr. Butts said he had received a lot of information about the

down-turn of the economy and business changes in the overall market. In one article from *Golf, Inc.* it said, "However, the addition of new courses and a troubled economy is forcing price wars between many facilities. The concern on the revenue side is that with overbuilt markets and a stagnant number of new players; it will take time for the market to correct itself. The game these days is not about the new customers coming into golf, it's about controlling what you have as much as possible. It's a battle." Mr. Butts said he feels we are, to a degree, subject to the economy. The golf course could cost in the range of \$4 to \$6 million and the lodge could run anywhere from \$8 to \$20 million, depending on the facility. In the ten-year plan put before voters in 1994 and then in 1996, the golf course was listed for the upcoming biennium. If we were to pay the design fee it could be an enticement. During conversations with Representative Dangeau and Bill Thomas from the Cross County Economic Development Commission, they were also trying to get as many involved and excited in the project. Jim Lindsey was contacted but his interest waned because he could not build weekend homes around the golf course. Public lands cannot be opened up for private use.

Ness Sechrest said he can understand some of the areas being overbuilt but this is an isolated area that is definitely not overbuilt as far as the number of golf courses. Mr. Sechrest said on occasion we lease to vendors. He asked if we could lease the golf course or could we lease some of the land around it for people to build properties. Richard Davies said we could build it and lease it or we could lease it to a company to build it and run it. Mr. Davies said public land cannot be leased or sold for sub-division home development – it has to be recreational facilities. Bud Shamburger said this is a part of the 1/8¢ promise. Richard Davies said if the private sector won't do it, it is still our promise to build a golf course. Mr. Davies said we are trying this as far as we can. Ness Sechrest asked what the fee is for the design. Stan Graves said a fee was not included in the proposal that was submitted. Greg Butts said \$400,000 to \$500,000 is a rough estimate. Bud Shamburger asked how long it would take to build. Stan Graves said one and one half years after design. Ness Sechrest said the people he has talked with have said a stand alone golf course is not profitable, there will have to be a lodge. That is what makes this difficult because it jumps from \$4 million to over \$12 million. Greg Butts said the original plan for Village Creek was to build a lodge. Village Creek was meant to be the DeGray of the state park system in east Arkansas. Ness Sechrest said golfers like a package deal – golf and lodging. Mike Mills said he likes the plan of questioning the firms who inquired.

Campsite Reservation Policies

Greg Butts said Sandy Burch did some quick research with our adjacent states, private and federal campgrounds on major subject areas ranging from check-out times, extending a stay, percent of sites that are reservable, etc. Mr. Butts said this is general information about the major subjects discussed at last month's State Parks Committee meeting. Prior to next month's meeting he will mail out the details of what Arkansas State Parks does with policies along with recommendations. Mr. Butts asked the Commission to communicate with him if there is an area that should be researched or suggestions on what should be done.

Miscellaneous

Greg Butts showed the Commission an article that Shelby Woods found on the Crater of Diamonds State Park that was in a Sturgis, South Dakota publication that is geared to motorcycle owners.

Debbie Haak asked for a report on the progress at Crater of Diamonds State Park. Stan Graves said we are 90% completed with Phase I which included an amphitheater, bathhouse, residences, wildlife viewing blind, new pavilion, parking, etc. Mr. Graves said the aquatic playground has been slow to get out of the ground because we had a wet spring and other problems.

TOURISM DIVISION

2% Tourism Tax Memorandum

Joe David Rice presented a memorandum from Charles McLemore regarding a breakdown of the 2001 2% tourism tax by source, as requested by Commissioner Ted Mullenix. Information provided by the Arkansas Department of Finance & Administration indicates that 88.3% of the tax is from lodging, 3.8% is from amusement parks and the remaining 7.9% is attributed to other sources, which include marina and camping fees. The memo noted the importance of how a business identifies itself for tax reporting purposes is reflected in the breakout.

Ted Mullenix replied that he wants more precise information to figure out exactly where the tax is being collected and if the marketing efforts are paying off. Mr. Davies explained that it is difficult to get more detailed information because of the different codes businesses use to identify themselves. Mr. Mullenix reiterated that he still wants more precise information. He asked for Department staff to work with the Department of Finance and Administration to obtain it. Mr. Rice stated that he would ask Charles McLemore to do some more research.

2004 Governor's Conference on Tourism Bid Presentations

Pine Bluff

Bob Purvis presented a bid for the Pine Bluff Convention & Visitors Bureau to host the 2004 Governor's Conference on Tourism. The Ramada Inn & Suites Convention Hotel is the proposed host hotel.

The "Early Bird" function theme would center on music either written or played by Arkansas Entertainers Hall of Fame inductees. Mr. Purvis noted that the Convention Center has ample space for the conference. Polly Wood Crews asked what he would do to increase conference attendance. Mr. Purvis replied that he would contact everyone in the four-county region and convey how important his or her attendance at the conference is to the industry. Mr. Purvis felt that they would be successful in raising attendance.

Eureka Springs

Terry Cook presented the bid for Eureka Springs. Representatives from the area included Barbara King-Dozier, Lynn Berry, Mardell Bland, Melissa Evans, Jon Loudermilk, and Jed Bullock. The proposed host hotel is the Best Western Inn of the Ozarks. The proposed "Early Bird" function would include a Victorian ambiance as well as country and mountain music played at different locations in Pine Mountain Village. Mr. Cook expressed that the people of Eureka Springs are dedicated to making a great Governor's Conference in 2004. Also suggested was to change the Henry Awards ceremony to a "Hollywood style" atmosphere.

Chairman Haak questioned how they felt attendance could be increased at the conference. Mr. Cook replied that by making the Henry Awards more glamorous and exciting that more people would attend. Concerns were voiced about whether the facilities were large enough for the conference. Ms. Clark stated her concerns about the timing of the Henry Awards and the fact that the banquet and the ceremony would be in two different locations. Richard Davies questioned the transportation arrangements. Mr. Cook replied that people would be moved in a timely manner and they would certainly be able to make the necessary preparations.

Fayetteville

Allyson Twiggs, assisted by Marilyn Johnson, presented the bid for Fayetteville. The Radisson Hotel, formerly the Hilton, is the proposed host hotel. The Fayetteville Town Center, the Radisson Hotel, and the Center for Continuing Education are the proposed facilities. The proposed "Early Bird" function would be held at the newly renovated UARK Bowl and include a jazz band. Ms. Twiggs noted that Fayetteville had last hosted the conference in 1985. Commissioners questioned the transportation arrangements. Polly Wood Crews asked what the people of Fayetteville would do to increase convention attendance. Ms. Johnson stated that they would be happy to do a targeted mailing. Ms. Crews further asked if the citizens would be enthusiastic and if they would be involved in the conference. Ms. Johnson noted that Ms. Twiggs had brought a new level to the industry and that the community has been involved and businesses have participated in conferences held in Fayetteville. Ms. Clark questioned the parking and transportation arrangements. Ms. Johnson replied that parking would be available to attendees and the A&P Commission could, quite possibly, pay for the transportation costs. Joe David Rice asked if the students and faculty associated with the University's Hospitality Management program and the Carnall Hall facility could be included in the conference. Ms. Johnson replied that they would work to have them involved and that it would be an excellent opportunity for them to participate. Ms. Clark asked about their offer to arrange for Houston Nutt to speak at one of the sessions. Ms. Twiggs responded that they would be glad to send an invitation to him immediately, in order to get the event on his calendar.

Commissioners discussed the merits of each location. Several commented that they felt uncomfortable making a decision in front of the bidders. Danny Ford remarked that he really liked Eureka Springs's proposal but was concerned about the transportation arrangements. Chairman Haak noted that it is very hard to pick between such outstanding bids. She mentioned that Eureka Springs has always been one of the more popular conference destinations.

Polly Wood Crews reminded fellow commissioners that Fayetteville has not hosted the conference since 1985 and that it's important to attract new people to the conference. Ms. Crews invited bidders to come back with future bids, in the event they are not chosen for the 2004 conference. Several Commissioners agreed with Ms. Crews.

Danny Ford moved to approve holding the 2004 Governor's Conference in the City of Fayetteville. Bud Shamburger seconded and the motion carried. Wade Williams abstained.

Chairman Haak stated that, she would like for the bidders to know, in writing, what criteria are used to make the decision of which city is awarded the bid. She feels the criteria should include the fact that the presentation itself is not as important as what is offered, the creativity of the presentation, the amount of time and money that went in to the presentation, the actual logistics that have to do with the Governor's Conference, and what Commissioners will accept as a general design for the conference. It should also be included that it is important if the city has never hosted the conference or if it has been quite some time since the city hosted it. Wade Williams stated that the criteria used should be uniformly applied. He also stated that he did not agree that the host city should be easily accessible to legislators in session, but if it was part of the criteria, everyone should be made aware of that fact. Polly Wood Crews stated that being accessible to legislators is important because it is part of the strategy of making them more aware of what it is the Department does. Ness Sechrest noted that it's critical to be accessible to the legislators since they receive so many invitations to different events and that accessible activities receive priority. He believes that the Department needs to let legislators know what it's doing but did agree that cities should be informed of the criteria. Montine McNulty remarked that one of the reasons the conference is typically held close to Little Rock during session years is because staff members have been summoned to testify and must be able to get back quickly.

Bill Barnes questioned why the presentations could not be held one month and voted on at the next meeting. Mr. Davies suggested voting the next day, at the same meeting. Mr. Barnes stated that he felt he did not have enough time to digest the information contained in the proposals, but agreed with Mr. Davies. Commissioners generally discussed that they felt uncomfortable having a public vote. Mr. Mullenix mentioned that Commissioners need staff recommendations at least a month before the bid presentations.

Mr. Barnes asked if a motion needed to be made to change anything. Chairman Haak stated that the Governor's Conference committee should discuss it first and include the issue with the recommendations brought back to the Commission. Chairman Haak reiterated that she feels it is important that the cities know the criteria. Nancy Clark remarked that the cities receive a detailed set of guidelines with the bid application. She also noted that, in response to the time issue, the only stipulation is that a city cannot bid within five years of hosting the conference. Polly Wood Crews stated that she felt the bidders understood why the Commission voted the way it did and that she had personally invited bidders to come back in the future.

Commissioners also discussed whether or not a city hosts the conference at a loss. Ms. Clark stated that the host city not only gets the income from the hotel rooms and the food, but

also receives a lot of exposure. Ms. McNulty stated that although the conference may be hard on the A&P Commissions and the convention facilities, but that cities do receive a large economic impact due to the rooms and the food. Mr. Rice agreed that the host city receives a lot of exposure. Ms. Clark also stated that she makes it very clear to the host city that it should not spend money that is not budgeted, for hosting the conference. Richard Davies mentioned that Arkansas has a finite number of cities that are capable of hosting the Governor's Conference and at some point they will all host the conference.

Cooperative Minority Marketing Proposal

Joe David Rice introduced Barry Travis, Executive Director of the Little Rock Convention & Visitors Bureau. Mr. Travis presented a proposal for a cooperative minority marketing effort. Pam Jones, whom he thanked for preparing the presentation, assisted him. Participants in the effort include Little Rock, North Little Rock, Pine Bluff, and Hot Springs. Each city has pledged five thousand dollars towards research, advertising and tradeshows primarily targeting African-Americans. Mr. Travis described each city's current African-American marketing strategy as well as detailed the top African-American meetings and conventions for each city, which include national conferences. Mr. Travis discussed the marketing opportunities that are available for the marketing efforts and pointed out why it is necessary to market to this segment of the population.

Mr. Travis stated that the initial concept is for the four cities, Little Rock, Hot Springs, North Little Rock, and Pine Bluff, to target a marketing campaign to minorities residing in the Memphis area during February 2003 (Black History Month). All affordable media including television, radio, print and direct mail would be utilized. The concept would be presented as package travel to be done over a long weekend. There is not an exact dollar figure at this time for the campaign since it is still in the planning stages. Mr. Travis asked for the Department's participation in the cooperative effort.

Mr. Davies clarified that Mr. Travis wanted the Commission's approval of the concept and that a final plan would be presented and would include the costs of the campaign. Ted Mullenix inquired as to how the private sector would be involved. Mr. Travis replied that the concept does not include creating something new, rather the concept is directed at a targeted audience visiting current locations and attractions. Wade Williams stated that he likes the timing of the idea and the fact that it's kind of an off season. He also stated that some parameters need to be developed for using the cooperative money, including that the money is to promote existing entertainment venues, the money is only for unique promotional ideas, and that the economic amount of the Department's participation should be limited.

Mr. Purvis noted that in the past, it has been Department or advertising agency staff that has proposed the marketing efforts. This time the cities have come together in an effort and have asked the Department to partner. Mr. Williams stated that Commissioners needed to encourage the development of programs but reiterated that guidelines need to be set. Bill Barnes, in response to Mr. Williams, stated that personally, he did not want to stifle any creative ideas that

may not be brought to the Commission because of guidelines and that he would rather look at each individual project on its own merits. He stated that if there were guidelines, they should be broad so as not to stifle any efforts.

Bill Barnes moved to approve the Cooperative Minority Marketing Proposal concept and directed Little Rock/North Little Rock, Pine Bluff, Hot Springs to return with a plan including costs for the campaign for final approval. Polly Wood Crews seconded and the motion carried.

Richard Davies noted that in the preliminary discussion of the 2003 marketing plan, they discussed putting a portion of money into cooperative projects. In the past, it had been part of the contingency budget. He stated that parameters would be looked at, but they probably should be broad so as not to stifle any projects. He also stated that in the past the Department's effort had been capped at 20%-25%. Wade Williams stated, in past instances, the money has been "seed money" rather than funding the project. Polly Wood Crews applauded the cities coming together to promote the state instead of competing with one another.

National Meeting of the Mississippi River Parkway Commission Report

Nancy Clark stated that the national Mississippi River Parkway Commission, which began in 1938, recently held its 64th annual meeting in West Memphis. She mentioned that Richard Davies was a well-received speaker at the conference and that he had spoken about the history of Arkansas in a "lighthearted manner." The majority of the meeting focused on forming an interpretive plan for the Great River Road, which runs from Canada to the Gulf. The Commission's goal is for all states to obtain scenic byway status. Arkansas was the fifth state to obtain the status for its portion of the Great River Road. Ms. Clark noted a scenic byway resource center located in Minnesota provides information and assistance to states. Richard Davies remarked that the Mississippi River Parkway Commission appreciates Ms. Clark's hard work and dedication.

Section Reports

Research & Information Services

This section fulfilled 25,090 requests for information during July 2002. Overall inquiries are down 18% from the same period last year. Tourist Information Center visitation totaled 118,350 for the month of July. Overall year-to-date visitation to the Tourist Information Centers is down .2% from last year. Retirement/Relocation requests totaled 1,583 and user sessions to the agency's five web sites totaled 293,586 for the month of July.

Charles McLemore visited the Texarkana and Red River TICs. He also took part in meetings regarding the Interstate Highway Rehabilitation Advisory Board as well as the TIC Rebuilding Team. Plans for the smaller, 3,000 square foot, TICs are currently being modified. A pre-bid conference has been scheduled for August 14th for the Texarkana Tourist Information Center.

Research has been prepared regarding fulfillment, inquiries and budgetary trends. Meetings were held to discuss the 2003 literature quantity order. Work is currently being conducted on the Spring/Summer Conversion Study. Staff members are also preparing for the fall TIC familiarization tour and have responded to several complaint letters.

Communications

Staff members ensured the July issue of Arkansastravel.com was posted on time. Two e-newsletters have also been sent out and items were submitted for *Travelin' Arkansas*. Requests for literature and materials received from travel writers were fulfilled. Preliminary work on the addition of a motorcycle touring section to Arkansas.com next year has begun. Planning efforts for a photography workshop at the new Elk Information Center in Jasper has also commenced. Staff members also worked on the 2003 Arkansas Tour Guide. Requests for color slides and videos were also fulfilled.

Group Travel

The section fulfilled 198 inquiries for information in July, bringing the year-to-date total to 1,176 inquiries. Literature, pins, and stickers were distributed to such events as the Arkansas Senior Olympics, the Arkansas Economic Developer 2002 Annual Conference, and the Arkansas Jewelers Association 2002 Conference as well as family and military reunions.

A familiarization tour of Southern Arkansas was conducted for group leaders from Kaleo Tours, based in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Bernie Jungkind, photographer with Cranford Johnson Robinson Woods, accompanied the tour in order to increase the amount of photography available for use in the group travel advertising efforts.

A meeting was conducted to discuss cooperative advertising and tradeshow opportunities. Sample itineraries and the new group travel e-newsletter were also discussed. Representatives from Little Rock, Hot Springs, Fort Smith, Fayetteville, Pine Bluff and CJRW attended. Plans for the cooperative advertising will be refined before the next meeting.

Tourism Development

Staff members report that all regional tourism associations met the July paperwork deadline. Donna Perrin and Kristine Puckett attended region meetings for both Delta Byways and the Heart of Arkansas in July.

The new Fall/Winter Calendar of Events has been received and will be distributed. Work for the 2003 Spring/Summer Calendar has already begun. The closing date for submissions is August 23rd.

The first of three closing dates, July 26th, for the Tourism Attraction Feasibility Study Matching Grant Program passed with no applications received. However, the section has received several inquiries regarding the program.

A mail-out of Henry Award nomination forms will be conducted before September 1st. The deadline for nominations is October 31st. Winners will be honored at the 29th Annual Governor's Conference on Tourism in Fort Smith.

Marketing & Communications

2002 Fall/Winter Television Schedules

Karen Mullikin distributed the 2002 Fall/Winter Television schedule to the Commissioners.

2002 Fall/Winter Newspaper Insert

Ms. Mullikin distributed the newly printed 2002 Fall/Winter newspaper insert. It will run in seven markets as well as all daily and weekly newspapers in Arkansas. Circulation is 3.7 million and will be dropped on August 25th, the weekend before Labor Day.

Web Site Reports

Marla Johnson Norris commented that the presentation is in response to requests for information about web site performance. She introduced Jennifer Peper, who will assist in research and reporting efforts on the status of the web sites.

Jonathan Eudy briefly reported on work completed over the past month. Projects include the online management tool for the Calendar of Events, which allows cities and events to update their own information on the site. Donna Perrin, Tourism Development Manager, edits the information for accuracy as well as the contents and then posts it to the site. The Calendar of Events portion has also been streamlined.

Printer friendly pages are now available for all media stories on both Arkansas.com and Arkansatravel.com. Pictures as well as text can be printed. Work was also completed on a Coca-Cola promotion, in cooperation with Libby Doss at Cranford Johnson Robinson Woods. The hotel listings on the web site have been updated with the help of Montine McNulty. The look and the feel of the "Book It" button has also been changed.

Marla Johnson Norris reported statistical information for the past six months. She stated that the number of pages viewed tripled, the number of visitors increased by one-third, and the amount of pages viewed by each visitor rose from six to ten pages. Ms. Norris explained the difference between a "hit" and a "page view." She also stated that in the past six months, page views have increased from approximately 600,000 to about 1,800,000 translating into approximately 180,000 visitors to the web site during July.

Ms. Norris stated that within Arkansas.com the most requested page is the Attractions section. The next requested pages are State Parks, the Trip Planner, the Calendar of Events, and the map section. Ms. Norris noted the majority of visitors to ArkansasStateParks.com went directly to the site instead of linking from Arkansas.com. Ms. Norris also discussed the ArkansasKids.com and Arkansastravel.com web sites.

Ms. Norris stated that approximately 10,000 people entered the Vacation Kit request page and 5,654 actually requested a kit during the month of July and 661 *Retirement/Relocation Guides* were requested. She also stated that a new tool had been added to the web site to gather information on where the visitors reside. Interested visitors can enter their zip code to find out the distance from their city to Little Rock. The information is gathered monthly and will be presented at a later date. The information will also be compared to the advertising efforts to see if visitors come from areas within the marketing egg. Jonathan Eudy noted that this method is just a discrete way to obtain the visitor's zip code. Mr. Woods asked if this would be used to make decisions on where to place advertising. Ms. Norris replied that it is just an overview of information. Mr. Davies noted that the information is just an indicator of where visitors are from. Mr. Davies and Mr. Woods agreed that the information tracks with all of the other research.

Ms. Norris stated the "Book It" button is working well and should continue to perform nicely. There were 3,007 who clicked on the button and 23 reservations were made. The revenue generated for the month of July totaled \$2,644. She is confident that revenues will increase.

Ted Mullenix conveyed his appreciation for the report. He inquired as to whether or not the sites had duplicate information. Ms. Norris replied that although the sites are prominently linked, they are targeted to different segments of the population; for example, arkansastravel.com is a media site, an online magazine.

Commissioners complimented Ms. Norris on her informative presentations. Ms. Norris stated that she would be happy to hear any comments, concerns or suggestions from Commissioners.

Miscellaneous

Joe David Rice stated that the resolution to Dan Flowers, passed at the last Commission meeting, would be presented to him next Wednesday. He noted that the Highway Department had held a meeting with bidders for the Texarkana Tourist Information Center, which is scheduled to open in November 2003.

RESOLUTION

- WHEREAS, More than 2.5 million travelers per year currently visit Arkansas Tourist Information Centers (TICs); and,
- WHEREAS, The tourism industry is a vital component of the Arkansas economy, with total travel expenditures of over \$3.9 billion and travel-generated

employment of 49,653 in 2001; and,

- WHEREAS, The primary function of these TICs is to provide Arkansas travelers with information on scenic, historic and recreational points of interest within the state, presenting the positive first impression of Arkansas that is so critical in persuading guests to stay longer and discover new attractions; and,
- WHEREAS, The average TIC was constructed in 1977, was built to last 20 years, and is not up to current industry standards set by competing states; and,
- WHEREAS, Governor Mike Huckabee announced a rebuilding plan for eight of the twelve Arkansas Tourist Information Centers jointly operated by the Arkansas State Highway & Transportation Department and the Arkansas Department of Parks & Tourism; and,
- WHEREAS, The Arkansas State Highway Commission, the Arkansas General Assembly, and Governor Huckabee approved new TIC construction in Texarkana, Corning, Fort Smith, and El Dorado during the current biennium; and,
- WHEREAS, Members of the Arkansas State Highway Commission and staff of the Arkansas State Highway & Transportation Department have worked tirelessly on all matters associated with TIC construction including funding, site selection, landscaping, and architectural design in order to maximize the economic benefits for Arkansans, provide the latest amenities to the traveling public, and accurately reflect the culture, hospitality, and charm of Arkansas;
- NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Arkansas State Parks, Recreation & Travel Commission extends its gratitude to the Arkansas State Highway Commission and Arkansas State Highway & Transportation Department for their unyielding support and expertise in making the TIC improvement program a reality.

<Signatures of ASPRTC Members>
July 18, 2002

Mr. Rice stated that a number of interested ad agency representatives had attended the question and answer session at the Department regarding the Agency Selection process. Mr. Mullenix inquired as to the structure of the process and how things would work. Mr. Rice replied that applications are due about mid-September and that the staff would select the appropriate finalists. Applications will be sent to Commissioners before the meeting and finalists will present bids at the November Commission meeting in Harrison. Each agency will be able to set-up the day before. Commissioners will go to each room to hear presentations, which will begin Thursday morning, November 20th and will last approximately an hour with a fifteen-minute question and answer period. The Commission will reconvene that afternoon and vote to award the contract. He noted that any discussion during the Commission meeting is subject to the Freedom of Information Act because it is a public meeting, not an executive session.

Mr. Mullenix questioned why the agencies were excluded from one another's presentation if it was a public meeting. Mr. Rice responded that each had agreed to do so out of courtesy.

Richard Davies stated that there is a petition to abolish the sales tax on food, drugs, and possibly restaurants. He stated that if it passes, it would negatively impact the 1/8th of a cent approximately four million dollars per year. It would probably also wreck every Advertising & Promotion Commission City in the state because they receive the city sales taxes. He wanted to make sure Commissioners were aware of the impact on both the State Parks and Tourism divisions. Mr. Davies stated that even if the sales tax were raised, it would not help because the 1/8th cent is taken off the base. The only way that Parks could recover is by the removal of exemptions to put something back into the base, which would not affect Tourism. The Advertising & Promotion Commissions could possibly be helped if the sales tax were raised, but they are restricted by law on the amount of cents that can be collected. The legislature would have to change what could be taxed. Polly Wood Crews stated that the general public is not aware of the ramifications if the tax were repealed. Mr. Mullenix agreed. Montine McNulty noted that the language in the petition states that the tax can never be enacted again. She also stated that the language is not clear enough for the general public to understand exactly what they would be voting on.

Joe David Rice presented the new 2002/2003 Fall/Winter Calendar of Events. He informed Commissioners that the Henry Awards nomination forms, for the Governor's Conference, were also available. Mr. Rice suggested that the Commissioners might enjoy the pertinent tourism-related articles in the folders.

The State Parks, Recreation and Travel Commission adjourned at approximately 11:00 a.m. on Friday, August 16, 2002.