

Missouri Park and Recreation Association

History

1968-2008

By David Ostlund, MPRA Executive Director 1977-2008

August 9, 2022

Author's note: This document includes the events that I feel were significant in the history of the Missouri Park and Recreation Association (MPRA) from 1968-2008. This time period covers the years I served as MPRA's executive director, along with the decade prior to my hiring. This history is not intended to be an all-encompassing history of parks and recreation in the state of Missouri during this time period, but specifically of the Missouri Park and Recreation Association organization itself. The events were reconstructed primarily from past MPRA meeting minutes, MPRA official publications, and executive director reports to the MPRA executive board/board of directors. Unfortunately, no MPRA Executive Board minutes were available for the years 1968-1977, and no executive director reports existed prior to my hiring as MPRA's first executive director. Therefore, the portion of this history from 1968-77 was created almost exclusively from articles from the MPRA official publication, the Explorer. This history is written 14 years after my employment with MPRA ended, and many of the events chronicled in this document happened over a half century ago. Whenever possible I have included exact dates, locations, and individuals' names, however, in many cases it was impossible to do so because written documentation of the event is either missing or lacking in specifics.

MPRA Certification

In the Spring, 1968 issue of MPRA's *Explorer* magazine, MPRA Certification Committee Chairman, W.L. Kloppe announced that over 170 recreation and park leaders in Missouri had met the requirements and qualified as administrators, supervisors, specialists, or leaders in the field of parks and recreation under the minimum standards established by MPRA and other professional societies throughout the country.

To be certified, an individual was required to complete an application form, submit their college credentials along with a letter of recommendation from their employer and \$5 to the MPRA Certification Committee.

Inventory of Parks and Recreation Curricula in Missouri

In the spring of 1969, the MPRA Study and Research Committee undertook a project to identify the Missouri colleges and universities that provided recreation and/or parks educational offerings. Questionnaires were mailed to 50 educational institutions around the state, with 48 replies to the survey received by the committee. The study revealed that there are four institutions in Missouri currently offering a four-year degree with a recreation major. Those four institutions are Central

Missouri State College, Northeast Missouri State College, Southwest Baptist State College, and the University of Missouri-Columbia. Five other colleges/universities offered a four-year degree in a related field with a recreation emphasis.

Creation of the MPR Scholarship Charitable Trust

On April 2, 1970, Dr. Lyle B. Beaver, head of the Department of Recreation at Central Missouri State College, received formal confirmation from the IRS that the Missouri Park and Recreation Scholarship Charitable Trust was exempt from federal income tax as an educational and charitable organization described in section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code. The initial members of the Trust's Board of Trustees were Dr. Lyle B. Beaver, Chairman; Gordon Guetzlaff, and Gloria Rogers.

By July 15, 1970, a total of \$1,710 was received by the Trust for the year's round of scholarship applications. These funds came from a \$570 contribution from MPRA and \$1,140 from the James Foundation.

Just two institutions of higher learning in Missouri qualified to have scholarship funds available to their students, the University of Missouri and Central Missouri State College. The Board of Trustees received applications from 21 students. Seven students from each of the two eligible schools were awarded scholarships in 1970, ranging from \$100 to \$250. (One of the scholarship recipients was David Curtis, who later served as an MPRA President and later was inducted into the Missouri Recreation and Parks Hall of Fame.)

Resolution in Support of the Design for Conservation

On August 5, 1971, the MPRA Executive Board unanimously passed a resolution supporting the State Conservation Commission and its plan to conduct a state-wide referendum on a soft drink tax to support the commission's Design for Conservation. The Design for Conservation resulted from a study sponsored by the Conservation Commission recommending an expansion and acceleration of the existing conservation programs and services in line with a study team's recommendations.

The Final Years Before Full-time MPRA Staff

In October of 1971, Dr. Arlin Epperson was appointed as MPRA's first part-time executive secretary. At the time of his appointment, Epperson served as a recreation extension specialist at the University of Missouri-Columbia. Over time Epperson's duties as executive secretary would evolve to include maintaining MPRA membership records, coordinating logistical meeting arrangements, and communicating with MPRA Executive Board members. Epperson would serve as MPRA's executive secretary through his resignation date effective on January 1, 1977.

The MPRA executive board passed a legislative-related resolution at its August 8, 1974, meeting. The measure resolved that MPRA would initiate and support legislation that would revise state statutes to eliminate the collection of state sales taxes on all recreation participation activities other than taxes on

admissions and charges to places of amusement or entertainment in which the purchaser is primarily a spectator.

At the August 15, 1975, executive board meeting, the MPRA board approved Southwest Missouri State University's curriculum, allowing SMS students to apply for scholarships from the MPR Scholarship Charitable Trust along with students from the University of Missouri-Columbia and Central Missouri State University (CMSU).

At the November 6, 1975, MPRA Executive Board meeting, the board adopted a motion that the annual conference should be organized in a way to make a profit for MPRA. At this same meeting, the executive board approved a motion to provide a \$200 sponsorship of the 1976 Midwest Symposium on Therapeutic Recreation, March 18-20, in Indianapolis. Another motion was approved to establish MPRA's fiscal year from July 1 through June 30.

First Executive Director Hired and the Years on the University of Missouri Campus

On April 1, 1977, the MPRA Executive Board announced the MPRA membership had authorized the board to hire a full-time executive director and to obtain a suitable location for an office. Applications for the position were already being received at the time of the April 1 announcement.

Ron Braun served as the MPRA President for two consecutive terms, from July of 1977 thru June of 1979. Braun's presidency was met with an almost immediate challenge, as MPRA's first full-time executive director, David Ostlund, began his employment with MPRA on July 5, 1977, during the first week of Braun's presidency. Ostlund had previously served as the recreation director for the Warrensburg Parks and Recreation Department prior to his hiring with MPRA. Ostlund was selected from over 60 applicants for the position. His first-year contract with MPRA was for \$12,500. The new executive director was hired on a contractual basis, with MPRA providing no fringe benefits for the position.

Dr. Glenn Gillespie was a key player in MPRA being able to move from an almost entirely volunteer and professional driven association to one that included full-time hired staff. As chair of the University of Missouri Department of Recreation and Park Administration (MU RPA), Dr. Gillespie was able to work out an agreement with 1976-77 MPRA President, William Wight, and the MPRA executive board which allowed the association to occupy an office in room 622 Clark Hall on the University of Missouri campus. In addition to the free office space, MPRA received free telephone usage and quarter time secretarial assistance in exchange for the MPRA executive director providing instruction for one MU RPA class per semester.

At the time of Ostlund's hiring, there were no fewer than 17 MU RPA faculty members housed on the sixth floor of Clark Hall including three MU Recreation Extension specialists. Expertise and experience in all areas of parks and recreation were readily available to the new executive director.

MPRA was fortunate in its early years in Clark Hall in having Paula Belyea assigned by MU RPA as MPRA's quarter-time secretary. The ten hours per week of clerical assistance that MPRA was allocated in the

agreement with MU PRT was not nearly enough time to handle all the membership record keeping, conference and meeting registration, and other duties required of the MPRA secretary. Through Belyea's hard work and loyalty, all clerical duties during this time were handled in a timely and professional manner. Even when Belyea was re-assigned within MU RPA and had no formal responsibility with MPRA operations, she frequently volunteered to assist with various MPRA projects such as annual conference registration.

One of the association's major areas of concentration during Ostlund's first year was increasing revenues. MPRA experienced a 28% increase in membership revenues and a 93% increase in magazine advertising revenue during FY 1977-78, primarily through improved record keeping and aggressive recruiting efforts.

Other developments during the year included changing the name of MPRA's professional publication from the *Explorer* to *Images* and strengthening the relationship between MPRA and allied groups like the Missouri Municipal League (MML) and the Conservation Federation of Missouri (CFM). CFM Executive Director, Ed Stegner, was always eager to assist MPRA in its legislative endeavors. MPRA worked with the CFM in 1978 in actively opposing the Missouri General Assembly's efforts to repeal the Missouri Department of Conservation's 1/8 of 1% sales tax. It would not be the last time MPRA was involved in similar efforts, as the General Assembly would continue its attempts to repeal or weaken the 1/8 cent sales tax in future years.

New MPRA Logo

In early 1978, MPRA held a contest to design a new association logo, offering a prize of \$100 for the winning entry. The winning design featured the sun behind a forest of trees and was immediately incorporated onto the cover of the May-June 1978 issue of *Images* magazine. (Note: This logo continues to be MPRA's official logo at the time this document was created in 2022.)

On February 5-7, 1978, Ostlund attended a meeting in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, with other National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Great Lakes States executive directors. The Great Lakes Region of NRPA was far ahead of the rest of the country in hiring full time executive directors/secretaries to manage their state associations. The meeting was organized by IPRA/IAPD executive director, Ted Flickinger. This was the first ever formal meeting of state parks and recreation association managers and was the forerunner to the Council of Executive Directors (CED) and later the Council of State Executive Directors (CSED).

Ticket Consignment Plan Created

In early 1979, MPRA was able to work out an agreement with Six Flags amusement park to sell discounted Six Flags tickets through MPRA-member parks and recreation departments. Nine MPRA-member parks and recreation agencies participated in the activity in 1979. Those agencies were: Tower Grove Park, Berkeley Parks and Recreation, Richmond Heights Parks and Recreation, Kirkwood Parks and Recreation, Bridgeton Parks and Recreation, Rockhill Parks and Recreation, Ferguson Parks and

Recreation, Brentwood Parks and Recreation, and Des Peres Parks and Recreation. During the 1979 season, 726 Six Flags tickets were sold.

In 1980 three new parks and recreation agencies were added as participating Six Flags ticket consignment agencies, and a new consignment agreement was reached with Worlds of Fun. The new Six Flags agencies were Columbia Parks and Recreation Department, Warrensburg Parks and Recreation Department, and St. Charles Parks and Recreation Department. The initial participating Worlds of Fun agencies were: Blue Springs Parks and Recreation, Columbia Parks and Recreation Department, Liberty Parks and Recreation Department, Raytown Parks and Recreation Department, Warrensburg Parks and Recreation Department, and Clinton Parks and Recreation Department.

MPRA developed two new membership services in 1980, a legislative and critical issues hotline for quickly disseminating legislative information to the MPRA membership, and a job notification service called the Job Opportunity Bulletin (JOB). During its initial year, the legislative hotline had 54 individual subscribers and 68 members subscribed to the JOB.

In early 1979 MU Recreation Extension Specialist, Jerry Hitzhusen, and Ostlund representing MPRA's Ad Hoc Committee on Tan-Tar-A Accessibility, met with Tan-Tar-A Resort officials and were notified that Tan-Tar-A had approved three needed improvements at the resort identified by the ad hoc committee. Tan-Tar-A's approval of these improvements allowed MPRA to select the resort as the official site of the 1980 MPRA Conference. The improvements include adding a ramp at Tan-Tar-A's front entrance, renovating the men's and women's restrooms on the 6th level to allow usage by individuals with disabilities, and the re-designing two guest rooms on the 6th level of the resort to accommodate individuals with disabilities.

In addition to the support MPRA received from Dr. Glenn Gillespie and MU RPA at this time, the support of two other MPRA members was exemplary. Springfield Parks and Recreation Director, Dan Kinney, and Columbia Parks and Recreation Director, Dick Green, both were eager and willing to offer MPRA access to their park and recreation departments' facilities and other resources, generally at no charge to MPRA. This support of MPRA by both individuals continued throughout their respective careers in Springfield and Columbia. Kinney and Green both communicated to Ostlund on several occasions, "What's good for MPRA, is good for my department as well."

During Jerry Miller's presidential term (1979-80), George Nickolaus was appointed as MPRA's General Counsel, MPRA membership exceeded 700 members for the first time, a new Professional Registration Plan was adopted and implemented by the association and MPRA was honored at the 1979 National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Congress in New Orleans for the year's Best Public Service Announcement in the Wes Francis Audio Visual contest.

Hancock I

In 1980, Springfield businessman Mel Hancock initiated a petition drive that would limit local and state government spending and taxation. MPRA was immediately concerned that the passage of the

amendment would require public parks and recreation agencies to submit all increases in recreational fees and charges to a vote of the citizens in that jurisdiction.

Out of this concern, MPRA partnered with the University of Missouri in sponsoring an educational session on October 16 in the Memorial Union Auditorium on the University of Missouri campus in Columbia. Mel Hancock was invited to speak at the session to address the concerns of MPRA members in attendance. During the session Hancock stated that it was not his intention in authoring the amendment to require parks and recreation agencies to receive voter approval of recreational fee and charges increases.

MPRA sent a letter to the editor of every newspaper in Missouri in opposition to the Hancock Amendment. The Hancock Amendment was passed state-wide in November of 1980, and for years after its passage public parks and recreation agencies were required to submit proposed increases in recreational fees and charges to their citizens for voter approval.

In 1991 the Missouri Supreme Court, in *Keller v. Marion County Ambulance District*, devised a five-part test to determine the difference between a user fee and a tax increase. This test provided the guidance that allowed public parks and recreation agencies to increase fees without voter approval. Justice Duane Benton wrote that fee increases that are tax increases in everything but name are prohibited, but fee increases that are “general and special revenues” but not a tax.

In 1981 MPRA added Silver Dollar City as the third Missouri amusement park to participate in the MPRA ticket consignment program. Twenty different MPRA agencies participated in the 1980 amusement park ticket plan.

In early 1981, MPRA received word that the Missouri Secretary of State had issued a Certificate of Incorporation for the MPRA Trust Fund. MPRA staff immediately began the process of applying for tax free status.

On April 1, 1982, University of Missouri-Columbia Provost, Ronald Bunn, announced a three-year phase out of the university’s College of Public and Community Services. The Department of Recreation and Park Administration was one of three programs in the college. In reaction to the proposed elimination, David Ostlund, MPRA Legislative and Critical Issues Committee Chairman, Randy Vessell, and Stephen Powell of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources contacted Missouri House Committee on Higher Education Committee Chair, Winnie Weber, regarding the situation. Weber agreed to hold a public hearing on April 17.

Approximately 150 individuals attended the hearing. David Ostlund; Dean of the College of Public and Community Services, George Nickolaus; Department of Recreation and Park Administration Chair, David Compton, and RPA student Randy Bennett provided oral testimony in opposition to the proposed elimination. A number of other individuals, including MPRA members Bill Lockwood, Jerry Calvin, Cathy Unterriener, Susan Pivac (later Trautman), and Stephen Powell submitted written testimony in opposition to the elimination.

MPRA President, Bill Lockwood, also testified against the program elimination at the April 24 Provost's Advisory Committee on Program Reductions in Columbia, at the April 14 UMC Budget Hearing in Columbia and, along with David Ostlund, and the May 7 University of Missouri Board of Curators meeting in Rolla. Shortly thereafter, the University of Missouri Board of Curators announced that it would not proceed with plans to eliminate any academic programs for the following two years.

In the summer of 1983, a Citizens Committee for Soil, Water, and State Parks was formed to gather support for the new 1/10 cent sales tax initiative, Constitutional Amendment No. 2. The sales tax initiative was placed on the August 1984 ballot and was formally endorsed by MPRA. The MPRA executive director served as MPRA's representative on the citizens committee. Constitutional Amendment No. 2 passed with a narrow 50.1% statewide vote.

The Move to Jefferson City

At the May 24, 1984, MPRA executive board meeting, MPRA President, David White, announced his intentions to explore the relocation of the MPRA office away from its present location in Columbia. A motion was passed by the MPRA Executive Board to "actively pursue" the concept of relocating the MPRA office.

At the April 3, 1985, meeting of the MPRA Executive Board, a motion was passed for MPRA to move the MPRA office from its present location in Columbia to an office building provided by the Jefferson City Parks and Recreation Department at 1203 Missouri Boulevard, pending "approval and acceptance of the contract/lease agreement" by both parties. Rental payment for the office space was set at \$75/month.

The formal move of the MPRA office from Columbia to Jefferson City took place in early August of 1985. Everything MPRA owned at the time fit comfortably into the executive director's automobile. Immediately upon occupying the new MPRA office, approximately \$4000 was spent on office equipment and furniture for the new office, including the association's first computer, a used TRS-Model II.

New Funding for Local Parks, Hancock II, and Other Legislative Issues

The 1986 session of the Missouri General Assembly marked the beginning of a decade of aggressive effort on the part of MPRA to ensure legislation was passed that would provide a reliable new source of funding for public parks and recreation agencies in Missouri. MPRA worked closely with the St. Louis Regional Commerce and Growth Association (RCGA) and the Conservation Federation of Missouri (CFM) in composing House Joint Resolution (HJR) 63, introduced by Representative Joe Auer. The resolution called for a new one-quarter cent statewide sales tax, with 46% of the tax going to the Department of Conservation and the remaining 54% going to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Thirty-seven percent of the money allocated to DNR would have been used for grants to local parks. This resolution failed.

On June 17, 1986, Missouri Governor John Ashcroft signed Senate Bill (SB 437) into law. The law took effect on August 13 and meant municipalities and political subdivisions in Missouri would no longer have

to collect state sales taxes on admission fees paid to attend parks and recreation activities and programs.

In the fall of 1986, David Ostlund presented testimony at three regional MKT Railroad Abandonment hearings in different locations around the state supporting the development of a recreational trail along the railroad corridor.

In 1987, no fewer than seven resolutions were introduced in the Missouri General Assembly that were intended to extend the state parks/soils sales tax at its current funding level. Two of the resolutions were for the straight renewal of the existing one-tenth cent tax. Five resolutions included new funding for local parks.

MPRA continued to work with the RCGA and the CFM in the 1987 session of the Missouri General Assembly in drafting HJR 32 (later expanded to House Committee Substitute for HJR 32, 8, 11, 14, 30 and 39), sponsored by Rep. Jerry McBride. The resolution called for a new 3/16-cent sales tax split evenly three ways between state parks, soil and water conservation, and local parks. The local park portion called for a 75 (state) 25 (local) matching grant program. The general assembly adjourned without passing any of the seven resolutions.

Later in 1987, Speaker of the House, Bob Griffin, established an interim committee on "Sales Tax for Parks and Soil and Water Conservation" chaired by Rep. Jay Russell. Three public hearings were presented around the state in November of 1987. Those testifying at the hearings included Dick Green, Bill Lockwood, Wayne Kennedy, Ron Coleman, Dave Byrd, and Dave Ostlund.

In the 1988 session of the Missouri General Assembly, MPRA (with MML and CFM support) drafted language that was contained in HJR 58, sponsored by Rep. Jay Russell. HJR 58 called for Missourians to vote in November on a constitutional amendment that would provide a two-tenths cent sales tax for soil and water conservation and for state and local parks. The funding formula changed frequently throughout the session, but initially called for soil and water interests to receive one-quarter of the proceeds and one-quarter for state parks. One-half of the monies were to be distributed to cities and counties for parks and recreation or for storm water control or for sanitary sewers. HJR failed when House Majority Leader, Anthony Ribaldo, refused to bring the matter up for a vote on the final day of the session.

Another piece of legislation dealing with local parks (and other) funding was introduced by Sen. Norman Merrill. SJR 29 called for a 45 (state parks): 45 (soil and water conservation): 10 (local parks) split of a one-tenth cent sales tax. The local parks 10% share was estimated to generate approximately \$4 million per year. This resolution failed.

On September 2, 1993, MPRA president Stan Ochsner, Dan Kinney, Dodee Mathews, and Randy Warner met in Springfield with Congressman Mel Hancock to express MPRA concerns relating to the Hancock II Amendment. The original Hancock II petition was interpreted by MPRA officials to require voter approval for establishing and raising parks and recreation user fees.

During the meeting, Hancock revealed that he was aware of the problems that Hancock I had created. He further stated that Hancock I was not meant to have the onerous impact it exerted on fees and charges. He stated that Hancock II would have specific wording to define the terms “taxes, fees, and charges,” but was unwilling to include language in Hancock II that would specifically exempt public parks and recreation departments. When a revised Hancock II-B petition was released, it allowed local governments to adjust user fees internally.

In early 1994 the MPRA Legislative and Critical Issues Committee and MPRA staff were able to convince Kansas City Senator Harry Wiggins to introduce Senate Joint Resolution (SJR 18) in the 1994 session of the Missouri General Assembly. SJR 18 called for a one percent increase in the state sales tax for two years to fund local parks. All tax monies collected from the “Penny-for-the-Parks” resolution during the two-year period were to have been deposited in a “Local Parks Endowment Trust Fund”. At the end of the two-year period, the balance of the fund would have been nearly \$1 billion. If passed, the bill would generate approximately \$40 million per year to be distributed to municipalities and counties on a per capita basis for the acquisition, development, renovation, and restoration of public parks and recreation facilities. The bill never made it out of committee.

MPRA had a major victory in the General Assembly in 1994. The association’s Omnibus Parks Bill, HB 1192, sponsored by Springfield Rep. Craig Hosmer, was passed and signed into law. The bill allowed people who reside outside the city limits to petition the governing body of the municipality and the county commission to receive parks and recreation services outside the city limits. The measure also eliminated the cap on the maximum levy for parks purposes. Finally, the bill amended the Neighborhood Improvement District Act to allow the costs of maintenance and operation to be covered beyond the life of the bond.

Dave Ostlund, Michelle Knudsen, and Kansas Recreation and Park Association (KRPA) Executive Director, Laura Kelly, announced a partnership to hold an annual KRPA/MPRA Professional Development Seminar (PDS) in the Greater Kansas City area with KRPA and MPRA alternating as hosts. The first PDS was held at the Liberty Community Center on November 3, 1995. Jodi Rudick, the owner of Advisors Marketing Group was the presenter at the seminar. A total of 92 individuals registered for this seminar.

In 1995 Representatives Jerry McBride and Phil Tate introduced HJR 18 a resolution that called for the straight renewal of the state parks/soils one-tenth cent sales tax. Senator Harry Wiggins introduced a similar resolution (SJR 1). Sen. Wiggins later introduced a substitute for his resolution that called for state parks to get 37.5% of the tax and local parks 17.5%. Neither resolution passed when the general assembly adjourned. This necessitated the initiative petition process to renew the state parks/soils tax.

MPRA, working with the Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District, drafted two parks funding bills, HJR 22 and SJR 22 (sponsored by Sen. William McKenna). The resolutions called for doubling the state parks/soils one-tenth cent sales tax. The additional one-tenth cent tax would have been divided equally between local parks and storm water control. Both resolutions failed.

The highlight of the 1995 session occurred later in the session. Rep. Daniel Hegeman sponsored MPRA’s HB 88, a bill that would allow for the creation of regional recreation districts. Later in the session, Rep.

McBride offered a House Committee substitute for HB 88 that enabled any city or county to pass up to a one-half cent sales tax for parks and/or stormwater purposes. The resolution passed and was signed into law in June by Gov. Mel Carnahan.

On March 20, 1995, Dave Ostlund, Mary Donze, Bill Lockwood, and Dick Green met with Roger Mitchell, Dean of the College of agriculture at MU, to address reports of a new series of program review at MU that could threaten MU RPA. The MPRA delegation was assured that the situation was not as serious as what was being played in the media.

On June 27, 1995, Governor Mel Carnahan signed into law HB 88, which allowed for the formation of new regional recreation districts, but more importantly enabled Missouri cities and counties to pass up to a one-half cent sales tax for local parks and recreation. The passage of this legislation, that many believe to be the most important development in the history of public parks in Missouri in the 20th century, was initially met with surprisingly little fanfare from the parks and recreation community.

For years, MPRA had tried to create a funding source in Missouri modeled after the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). The MPRA Legislative and Critical Issues Committee had worked for years to develop a source of funding for its own "Missouri LWCF." The Legislative and Critical Issues Committee in the past had investigated the possibility of a beverage tax, an excise tax, a real estate transfer tax, and, most recently, a statewide sales tax as the new funding source.

In the summer 1995 issue of MPRA's Images magazine, Dave Ostlund reported in his "From the Director's Desk" column, "May 12 marked the end of another session of the Missouri General Assembly without the passage of a resolution which could provide a stable source of funding for city and county parks and recreation departments in Missouri."

Later in the same column, almost as an afterthought, Ostlund added that additional legislation was passed that would enable cities to pass a one-half cent sales tax for parks and recreation." Very few people in the parks and recreation "community" at the time realized the tremendous potential of this new legislation.

Much of the credit for the inclusion of the one-half cent parks sales tax enabling legislation goes to Missouri Representative Jerry McBride who added the sales tax language to the regional recreation district bill. McBride had been a longtime MPRA supporter and a supporter of parks and recreation in Missouri in general. (In 2009 Rep. McBride was voted into the Missouri Recreation and Parks Hall of Fame.) For years, Rep. McBride was the go-to person in the General Assembly for advice on all parks and recreation-related matters.

Shortly after the passage of House Bill 88, MPRA requested an opinion letter from Missouri Attorney General Jeremiah W. (Jay) Nixon addressing a concern generated from the bill's passage. Several Missouri municipalities contemplated substituting a sales tax for their existing park property tax, however, it was unclear what effect this action would have on existing administrative park boards formed pursuant to Section 90.500 through 90.570 of the Missouri Revised Statutes. In a three-page

opinion letter, Attorney General Nixon stated, "There is no provision in Sections 90.500 through 90.570 that causes a park board to be abolished even if no property tax for parks is levied."

The City of Maryland Heights was the first city in Missouri to use the new sales tax legislation. On November 8, 1995, Maryland Heights passed a one-half cent sales tax for local parks/storm water, gathering 52% of the votes cast. Maryland Heights officials estimated that the sales tax would generate \$4 million per year with no "sunset" on the bill. In the first two years after HB 88 was signed into law, no fewer than 23 Missouri cities and counties passed a sales tax for parks.

In the 1996 session of the Missouri General Assembly, the assembly approved Governor Carnahan's request for \$3 million funding for Missouri's local parks. Up to 80% of the money was earmarked for urban areas with regionally significant parks like Swope Park and Forest Park. The remaining money, nearly \$600,000 was made available to other local parks in Missouri.

In the summer 1997 issue of *Images* magazine, Dave Ostlund wrote an article entitled, "Using Other People's Money: How to pass a ½-cent sales tax referendum in your community." Shortly thereafter, MPRA staff created a manual entitled, "Missouri's ½ Cent Parks/Stormwater Sales Tax." The manual contained copies of the sales tax enabling legislation; election results and comparisons; how to pass a referendum; ballot language; how to determine the percentage of sales tax collected from non-residents; and copies of promotional brochures, fact sheets, and other campaign materials.

A new Ethnic Minority Society (MEMS) was added as MPRA's fifth section at the 1997 MPRA Conference in St. Louis, joining Leisure Educators, Municipal, Park and Natural Resource Management, and Missouri Therapeutic Recreation Society (MTRS) as the existing sections of the association. Nathaniel O. Wilkins was the first MEMS president. Wynna F. Elbert was the new vice president. Victoria Roque and Marilyn Rowan served as the new secretary and treasurer, respectively.

Building Committee Formed

A motion to form an MPRA Building Committee was unanimously passed by the MPRA executive board at its June 25, 1998, meeting. MPRA President, Pat Thomas, appointed the executive director to co-chair the committee due to his familiarity of the area and accessibility to the local real estate market. The first meeting of the MPRA Building Committee was held on August 27 at Pat Thomas' cabin at the Lake of the Ozarks. Building Committee members are co-chairs Dave Ostlund and Bob Hall, Richard Ash, Jerry Calvin, Bettie-Yahn-Kramer, Mark McHenry, Roscoe Righter, and Susan Trautman.

John Bardgett & Associates signed a one-year contract with MPRA in September of 1997 to serve as the association's lobbyist for the 1997-98 MPRA fiscal year. Mike Hood, Bettie Yahn-Kramer, Pat Thomas, and the MPRA executive director served on the MPRA panel interviewing prospective lobbying firms.

MPRA's first ever Small Towns Workshop was held in Ozark on October 28-29, 1998. A total of 71 individuals representing 37 different parks and recreation agencies attended the workshop. The Workshop Steering Committee consisted of Dodee Matthews, Shawna Flannery, Dewayne Long, and Monte Ezell.

MPRA's first offering of NRPA's National Playground Safety Institute (NPSI) was held in Liberty on November 19-20, 1998. Seventy-one individuals from 11 different states attended the program. Chris Deal served as the on-site host for the event.

Leisure Vision completed their first study for MPRA in late 1998. The Fees and Prices Survey was mailed to all parks and recreation agencies that completed the fees and prices survey.

MPRA's first ever website (www.mopark.org) was put into operation in early 1999. At the time it was one of nine NRPA state affiliates with operational websites. In the first few months of operation, the website received approximately 300 "hits" per month. One of the first features added to the website were links to MPRA member parks and recreation agencies and other parks/conservation-related organizations.

In the late 1990s the Greater St. Louis area experienced a significant growth in its inventory of modern community recreation centers and aquatic centers. The new generation of community recreation centers typically featured aquatic facilities, gymnasiums, meeting rooms, and fitness areas. Just prior to this trend in Missouri, a similar trend of building and operating modern community recreation centers had been developing in the state of Colorado, primarily in the Denver area. Because the state of Colorado was a pioneer in community center development, the Colorado state affiliate of NRPA developed a Facility Design School as part of the association's educational package.

Because of the success of the Colorado Facility Design School and the inventory of high-quality community recreation centers in the St. Louis area, MPRA decided to develop a facility design school of its own. It was hoped that the new school would not only appeal to MPRA member agencies who were interested in building new community centers, but the school would also be popular nationwide and be a new source of revenue for MPRA. Jeff King was elected to serve as the first chairman of the MPRA Facility Design School Planning Committee. Linda Bruer was elected vice-chairman. A total of 56 delegates, 34 exhibitors, and 13 sponsors were enlisted in the first "Gateway to Success" MPRA Facility Design School held in St. Louis, August 6-9, 2000.

Missouri Parks and Recreation magazine replaced *Images* as the official publication of MPRA with the Winter 2001 issue of the magazine. The new magazine features added content and a color cover.

In early 2002, a contingent of MPRA members consisting of Mary Vaughn, Bill Lockwood, Dave Curtis, and Dave Ostlund, along with Musco Sales Representative, Mike Shindler, traveled to the Musco Lighting national office in Oskaloosa, Iowa. The purpose of the trip was to solicit Musco's support of the MPRA building project. Representing Musco Lighting at the meeting were Musco President, Joe Crookham and Musco Marketing Director, Jeanie Bieri.

In April of 2002, Musco formally notified MPRA of its \$100,000 pledge to the MPRA building campaign in annual installments of \$20,000 for five years. A reception in Musco Lighting's honor was held at the MPRA office in Washington Park on June 20, 2002, at which time Joe Crookham presented MPRA with their first check of \$20,000 to the Building Committee Fund. A letter formalizing the agreement between Musco Lighting and MPRA was signed on June 7, 2007.

MPRA received a letter from the IRS dated October 22, 2003, confirming MPRA's new status as a 501(c)(3) public charity. Prior to becoming a 501(c)(3) public charity, MPRA was classified as a 501(c)(4) organization by the IRS. The change in IRS classification was a recommendation from the MPRA Building Committee. The building committee felt that it was imperative that MPRA be classified as a 501(c)(3) organization before it began a formal solicitation campaign to purchase or build a new MPRA office building. As a 501(c)(3) public charity, all MPRA office building donations are tax deductible. The new tax status also freed MPRA of the requirement to pay real estate taxes on any office building they own.

MPRA Buys New "Home"

On December 16, 2003, MPRA purchased an office building at 2018 William St. in Jefferson City to serve as its new "home". The purchase came six years after Roscoe Righter issued a challenge to the membership to begin raising the necessary funds for such a purpose at the 1998 MPRA Annual Conference in Kansas City.

At the time of the building purchase, MPRA had generated \$280,000 in pledges to purchase the new headquarters office. The new office building was purchased at a price of \$330,000. The building was built in 1995, consists of 5,476 square feet of space, two training rooms, a kitchen, a committee meeting room, and ample office and storage space. The building dedication was held on June 17, 2004.

The 2004 session of the general assembly was highlighted by the passage of SB 810, a bill that was endorsed and actively supported by MPRA. The bill established liability protection for landowners adjacent to Missouri trails. The passage of SB 810 will lessen a number of land acquisition and lease problems, allowing departments to move forward on future trail developments without legal concerns by landowners adjacent to the trail. Governor Holden signed SB 810 into law on June 22, 2004.

MPRA presented its first annual Missouri Trail Summit in Columbia, October 7-9, 2004. The program was presented by MPRA in partnership with the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, the Missouri Department of Conservation, Ozark Greenways, Inc., the Missouri Department of Transportation, the National Park Service, Ozark Trails ATV Club, Columbia Parks and Recreation, Trailnet, Cedar Valley Riders Saddle Club, the Missouri Parks Association, the Great Rivers Greenway, and the U.S. Forest Service. The goal of the trail summit was to gather trail advocates, users, organizations, and agencies from across the state in one location for the first time in Missouri trail history to discuss, learn, and work toward overall improvement of our state's trail resources. A total of 138 individuals registered for the event.

MPRA received notification in early 2005 that it was a beneficiary of the Evelyn Beaver estate. Evelyn's late husband, Dr. Lyle B. Beaver, was a long-time professor at Central Missouri State University (CMSU) and was the individual generally credited with the development of the MPR Scholarship Charitable Trust. When the final check from the estate was received by MPRA in August of 2006, the total donation from the estate to MPRA was \$132,845.84. At the time it represented the largest single gift to MPRA in MPRA history. (Note: The Evelyn E. Beaver estate also gave \$339,614.60 to the MPR Scholarship Charitable Trust.)

Hall of Fame

At the June 23, 2005, meeting of the MPRA Board of Directors, President Gary Ristow announced the appointment of Gary Thompson and Bill Lockwood to investigate the creation of a new Hall of Fame to recognize parks and recreation professionals and others who have made a difference in the lives of our communities and our profession. The goal of the committee is to have all Hall of Fame Guidelines established in time to introduce the inaugural class of Hall of Fame members at the March 12, 2009, MPRA 50th Anniversary Awards Banquet.

It was announced at the December 5, 2005, MPRA Board of Directors that Brad Chambers has been appointed Chair of the new Lyle B. Beaver Leadership Development Institute. The institute will have a nine-member board of regents. The purpose of the new program is to serve as a training ground for the development of tomorrow's leaders in our field. The initial offering of the Lyle B. Beaver Leadership Institute was January 17-19, 2007, at the Stoney Creek Inn in Columbia. A total of 29 delegates completed the training.

On June 21, 2007, Musco Lighting Sales Manager, Mike Shindler, announced to the MPRA Board of Directors that Musco Lighting had renewed its support of MPRA by pledging an additional \$100,000 to MPRA over a five-year period from 2008 thru 2012. This is in addition to the \$100,000 they had donated earlier that enabled MPRA to purchase its office building location in Jefferson City.

It was announced at the September 14, 2007, MPRA Board of Directors meeting that Susan Trautman will serve as the chair of the MPRA 50th Anniversary Planning Committee. The celebration will be held at the 2009 MPRA Conference in Kansas City and will include the induction of the first class of the MRP Hall of Fame.

On May 26, 2008, Jan Neitzert accepted MPRA's offer to serve as MPRA's second executive director. Her starting date for the new position was May 1, 2008. She was selected from a pool of 21 applicants. Neitzert replaced Dave Ostlund who served as MPRA's executive director for 31 years. At the time she accepted the new position, Neitzert was serving as MPRA's assistant executive director. Ostlund resigned his position at MPRA to accept a position with Musco Sports Lighting as Musco's partnership program manager.

2008-2018

By Jan Neitzert, MPRA Executive Director 2008-2018

Author's Note: Picking up where Dave Ostlund left off after an auspicious 31+ years with MPRA, I have attempted to be concise. As Dave alluded to, there are many "happenings" over the 11+ years that I served as Executive Director; however, out of respect for the reader, only events that had an immediate or eventual impact on the association are mentioned. I also sought to refresh my memory by consulting past publications, board meeting notes, and other records. Apologies for any omissions – I assure you they were unintentional, and I will always have the utmost respect and appreciation for each and every

staff member, volunteer leader, MPRA member, and partner for the good fortune that has led to MPRA's success throughout the years.

In the summer of 2007, the Ad Hoc Strategic Planning committee began meeting to discuss various issues. One of the major topics was equitable representation of the membership around the state; specifically, the current structure for voting results in a higher probability of metro area's candidates being elected. This phenomenon is not unique to Missouri, many other states' associations experience the same situation. As a result, there has been a movement toward alternate representation models. One alternative is regional governance, where elections are held in different geographical areas to ensure that all parts of the state have an equal chance to be represented. This initiative was voted upon by the membership and passed with a 92% approval rate. The first regional directors were Eric Urfer, Chad Shoemaker, Denny Bopp, and Kyra Kaltenbronn.

December 2007 – Process commenced for the transfer of profession certification activities to NRPA. Going forward, state associations will coordinate CEUs for their own educational events; members will be individually responsible for maintaining records for their own future certification process.

MTRS announced intent to discontinue as a section.

Truman Heartland selected as fund manager for MPRA's investments. Investment policy adopted by the Board.

Process begun for the initial MRP Hall of Fame inductions in 2009.

June 2008 – With Dave Ostlund's departure and Jan Neitzert's promotion, the Assistant Executive Director position was vacant. After a recruitment process, Gary Gates is hired as Assistant Executive Director.

SB1537 – A bill is passed in the MO legislature to discourage the illegal trade of scrap metal. This measure was welcomed by MPRA member agencies: for example, KCMO had lost an estimated \$400,000 worth of supplies from one of their maintenance yards. This legislation made it more difficult for scrap dealers to accept metal without identification from the seller.

Signs of an economic downturn begin to appear: MPRA members are directly affected by municipal budget cuts resulting in staffing reductions. The association is consequently faced with anticipated reduced membership numbers and conference/education participation. Investment account values fall. As a result of this downturn, the 2009 Facility Design School is cancelled due to low enrollment. The board establishes a Ways and Means Committee to guide the association through the challenges. This committee is tasked with closely monitoring and advising on matters related to revenue and expenses.

The business of the association continues: By-law changes result in a new board structure. Section presidents are no longer voting members. Current total of voting members is 13.

Three sections apply for continued section status: Aquatics, Park Resources, and Student.

Healthy Initiatives is approved as a new standing committee, to be chaired by Clark Allen.

Activities are underway for the 2009 50th anniversary of the Association. Susan Trautman coordinates the year-long celebration, to culminate at the 2009 Conference in Kansas City.

2009 – There are fourteen inductees into the inaugural “class” of the MRP Hall of Fame. (Jim Ewing, Norbert Wappelhorst, Joseph Jaeger, Gloria Rogers, Ford Hughes, Bob Hall, William Landahl, Frank Vadyck, Jerry McBride, Darwin Hindman, Wayne Kennedy, Ed Stegner, Liz Gilbert, Lyle B. Beaver.) The HOF committee directs staff on how the induction process will be handled (timelines, communication, attendance, physical awards, budget, etc.)

As the economic crisis continues into 2010, the strategic planning committee determines to focus on the most critical needs of the membership. At this particular point in time, it appears the governmental decision-makers are not realizing the total value of parks, recreation, and open space to their communities and citizens. The committee makes the bold move to conduct a major survey to find out exactly what people believe about that. Coincidentally, discussions are held with California’s association and their “re-positioning” initiative, called “VIP.” This is an attempt to establish parks and recreation as an “essential” public service.

Among other companies, Responsive Management is interviewed regarding a major statewide survey about citizens’ and elected officials’ opinion about parks, recreation and open space.* The survey is made possible by the monetary support and participation of MPRA, DNR, CFM, St. Louis Open Space Council and the Missouri Parks Association. Each of these organizations were offered the opportunity to have survey questions included to benefit their particular objectives.

On the national level, Regional Council format begins to experience declining participation and activity.

MPRA participates in national efforts to address the impact of Federal Graeme Baker legislation (pool drain entrapment prevention.)

Discussions begin on the potential of on-line voting for board and membership.

Legislative Items: LLPP, KATY Trail completion, recreational use legislation

In streamlining MPRA’s operations, the decision is made to reduce full-time employees to 2, hourly to 1 and engage the services of a contractual bookkeeper.

Upon recommendation of the Investment Committee, the board establishes a “Reserve Fund” with required minimal levels.

March 2010 – seven individuals are inducted into the MRP Hall of Fame (Richard Ash, Jerry Calvin, Randy Vessell, Dave Curtis, Dan Kinney, Richard Green, and Glen Gillespie).

June 2010 – The board determines that the “Annual Fund” committee is no longer necessary.

2010 – A series of disc golf tournaments (coordinated by Moberly Director Michael Bork) begins as both an outreach initiative and a revenue-generator. The “Bluebird Series” involves little expenditure from public agency members who have disc golf courses and engages a participant group often underrepresented in typical municipal organized programs.

After an RFP process, the Giddens Group is chosen as MPRA’s new lobbying firm, resulting in a cost reduction and more focused attending on an organization of MPRA’s size.

A partnership is studied for a joint facility design school with the Colorado Association. Colorado opts out in December 2010.

In response to the findings of the statewide survey, the board determines to establish a new campaign, “Did You Know? Friends of the Park.” The purpose of the campaign is to use metric-based data to identify and share what citizens and elected officials actually think about parks, recreation, and open space, including what they are willing to pay for such spaces and services. A new standing committee is named, and plans are made for a marketing strategy. The primary beneficiaries are the members of MPRA. Subsequently, it is decided that there is potential value to other state associations, educational institutions, and governmental bodies.

The “Splash Pass” initiative begins in St. Louis. Suggested by MPRA member Scott David, this is a punch-card format enabling St. Louis area patrons to experience a variety of aquatic facilities during the summer, saving families money as well. Eventually, this becomes a tremendous fund-raiser for the Southeast Region and MPRA. The Northwest Region would attempt to implement this program several years later.

2011 - Sports Section is established in response to the need of many MPRA members who deal primarily in the area of various sports activities.

2011 - Ted & Pat Jones are inducted into the Hall of Fame.

Board enacted Code of Ethics for Directors; Document Retention & Destruction Policy

LDI Cancelled due to on-going low participation numbers, reportedly from budget cuts on the municipal level.

2012 - Fitness Section established in response to the fact that most departments have a significant role in providing fitness facilities and programs for their communities.

2012 – Doug Eiken is inducted into the MRP Hall of Fame.

A Planned Giving Committee is established to encourage MPRA as a recipient of resources included in wills/estate planning.

2012 – Discussions begin with Kansas Association (KRPA) for a joint “Executive Forum.” This is in response to a finding that many individuals at the “top” of their communities’ leadership in parks and

recreation often need specific education and support. These annual events will alternate coordination between the two associations and be held in the greater KC area.

Facility Design School suspended indefinitely.

Creation of Missouri Trails Alliance and partnership with DNR, Dept. of Tourism, Springfield-Greene County Park Board, Great Rivers Greenway District, and KCMO Parks and Recreation. The goal is to create and market a statewide trails database. This initiative is in tandem with the expectation that American Trails will be naming Missouri the “Best Trails State.”

2013- Missouri named “Best Trails State” by American Trails. The Missouri Dept. of Natural Resources and Missouri State Parks commit to creating a major campaign around this recognition, with MPRA member agencies in support. The role of MPRA public agency members in the creation of a statewide trails database is critical, especially in terms of a 501(c)(3) partner.

2013 – Peter Sortino is inducted into the MRP Hall of Fame.

New Strategic Planning process begins, under the leadership of MPRA President Terry Robertson.

2013 - In conjunction with strategic planning vision, the value of focused marketing is recognized, especially as the reality of electronic communication growth becomes more evident. Sarah Veile is hired as FT Membership & Marketing Specialist. Staff now consists of 3 FTE, 1 contractual.

2013 – Roof replaced, 90% covered by insurance due to hail damage.

2014 – DYK/FOP partnerships formalized with Kansas, Oklahoma, Minnesota, Kentucky, Indiana, Alaska; presentations given to all those above, plus Arkansas, UC-Long Beach, Texas, Murray State University, GA; all MPRA regions and at NRPA; DNR/Missouri State Parks, Musco Lighting, Cunningham Recreation.

Charitable Giving (formerly Planned Giving) endowed amount attained at conference “Mane Event.”

Student/New Professional Section established in response to member requests for attention to this group, whose needs as those new to the profession are unique; also to encourage future participation in the association.

2014 – Abe Phillips is inducted into the MRP Hall of Fame.

2014 – HVAC System replaced.

2015 – MPRA begins preparations for the 2016 NRPA Conference to be held in St. Louis. The Board commits funds in advance to potential expenses related to the Conference.

MPRA agrees to assist in the 2016 effort to renew the Parks, Soils & Water Sales Tax.

Following a national trend, the board engages in the study of revising the MPRA membership structure.

Legislative – mandated minimum wage is an issue that would greatly affect parks and recreation agencies. This topic continues to be an issue as staffing challenges remain a problem for many public agencies.

2015 - Anita Gorman and Keith Roys are inducted into the MRP Hall of Fame.

In partnership with Mo Dept. of Health and Senior Services, MPRA pursues education regarding healthy concessions through a program called “Eat Smart in Parks.” This included a stipend to support the initiative.

Discrepancies arise regarding the tax-exempt status of the MPRA Scholarship Charitable Trust. The SCT is reinstated by the IRS about a year later.

The board directs a major inspection done of the MPRA building to prudently plan for future expenses.

September 2016 – Missouri hosts the NRPA National Congress in St. Louis. Co-chaired by Kyra Kaltenbronn and Michael Biedenstein, with participation by hundreds of MPRA members results is one of the most highly-rated NRPA events in recent memory.

2017 – In partnership with DNR, MPRA hires the first Missouri Trails Coordinator, Josh Adams, who becomes an employee of MPRA.

2017 – Leo Drey is inducted into the MRP Hall of Fame.

New membership structure is approved by a vote of the membership. The premise of this restructure is that larger agencies will be able to include more employees as MPRA members, therefore allowing each to learn and grow in their profession. This could potentially result in not only additional “members on paper” for MPRA, but also in nurturing future volunteer leaders.

2018 – Executive Director Neitzert notifies board of intent to retire effective 6/22/2018; Executive Committee assembles search committee.

2018 – Roscoe Righter is inducted into the MRP Hall of Fame.

2018 – After an extensive recruiting and vetting process, Gary Gates, who served as Assistant Executive Director since 2008, is hired as MPRA’s third Executive Director. Subsequently, Sarah Veile is promoted to Assistant Executive Director, and Heather Rice is hired as Membership & Marketing Specialist.