

# **Missouri Board on Geographic Names Meeting Minutes**

May 26, 2016 at 10 a.m.

James C. Kirkpatrick State Information Center

**Voting Members Present:** John Dougan (Chair), Chris Barnett (Vice Chair), Joseph Carter, Alan Foreman, Melanie Hans, Gary Kremer, Amy Moorman, Lynn Morrow, Frank Nickell, Tim Schmidt, Shelly Silch, Tony Spicci, Henry Sweets and Dwight Weaver

**Voting Members on Conference Call:** John Fisher

**Voting Members Absent:** Joseph Gillman, Debra Greene and Jerry Vineyard

**Non-Voting Members and Staff Present:** Jane Messenger (Corresponding Secretary) and Brian Rogers (Secretary)

## **Call to Order**

Chair John Dougan called the meeting to order at 10 a.m. by welcoming everyone and asking if there were any changes to the agenda. Dwight Weaver indicated he would like to add a discussion of Missouri cave names under new business.

Jane Messenger provided a few opening remarks, explaining that her computer was infected with a virus and, as a result, she lost digital versions of many name proposals submitted to the MOBGN. She also apologized for missing the previous board conference call due to health issues.

## **Minutes for November 2015 Meeting**

John Dougan asked if there were any changes to the minutes from the board's November 19, 2015, meeting. Henry Sweets moved the minutes be approved as presented. Tony Spicci seconded the motion. All in favor. None opposed.

## **Board Member Replacements and Reappointments**

John Dougan stated Tim Schmidt has joined the board as the Office of Administration's new designee and Melanie Hans has joined as the new designee from the U.S. Forest Service. He then explained the bill creating a designated seat on the board for the Missouri Department of Agriculture was held up in committee, meaning Darrell Pratte will continue to serve on the board in an advisory role. Citizen members with expiring terms, meanwhile, will be considered for reappointment in October.

John Dougan explained that Brett Chloupek, Assistant Professor of Geography at Northwest Missouri State University, has been approached about filling the citizen appointee seat vacated when Gordon McCann stepped down last year. His appointment will add a voice on the board

from the underrepresented northwest part of the state. Chris Barnett indicated Chloupek is enthusiastic about joining the board in October.

John Dougan then explained that the board might soon need to look into a replacement for Jerry Vineyard, as he is in poor health.

Gary Kremer asked who is in charge of ushering through the legislature the bill that would add a seat on the MOBGN for the Department of Agriculture. John Dougan replied that the Office of the Secretary of State is taking the lead. Kremer indicated that he would ask his connections in the House and Senate to offer their assistance as well.

### **Mel Carnahan Feature**

John Dougan indicated that none of the features on the list the board was considering naming after Mel Carnahan are significant enough to pursue and suggested another, larger feature be considered at some point in the future. Jane Messenger reminded the board that the feature does not necessarily have to be in the southeast part of the state since Mel Carnahan is known statewide.

### **Rudledge/Rutledge Bluff**

Jane Messenger explained that Rudledge Bluff is a 20-foot cliff along the western shore of Stockton Lake, in Cedar County, and that it has been identified as such on USGS topographic maps since 1956. The name change proponent, however, believes it should be “Rutledge Bluff,” to reflect the surname spelling of a family that lived in the area in the early 1900s. Gary Kremer moved to change the name to “Rutledge Bluff.” Joseph Carter seconded the motion. All in favor. None opposed.

### **Frog Rock**

Jane Messenger stated Frog Rock is a seven-foot tall pillar in Pulaski County bearing a sculpted resemblance to a frog. Located just outside Waynesville, the feature has been called “Frog Rock” by locals for 20 years and the mayor is officially proposing to designate it as such.

Henry Sweets asked if there are other instances in Missouri where man-made features were bestowed with official names. Jane Messenger replied that there are not any examples of named carved rocks in Missouri, but that the practice is allowed by the USBGN. Chris Barnett indicated that man-made structures—dams, buildings, etc.—are assigned official names.

Tim Schmidt inquired about any safety concerns and/or liability issues as the rock sits on land controlled by the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT). Joseph Carter responded that he thought this might be an issue as well and asked Jane Messenger if she thought naming the feature would increase foot traffic to the site. She replied no, stating that the site is already

frequented by the public and, therefore, in her opinion, naming it would not increase the number of visitors.

Gary Kremer stated that he does not see the relevance of safety at the site when it comes to officially naming the feature. Chris Barnett replied that the board discourages naming activity if it will bring unwanted attention. Jane Messenger again stated that it has been a known tourist attraction for years, so it is unlikely that giving it an official name would increase the number of visitors. Tim Schmidt then stated that he is concerned about people stopping on the side of the road to visit the site and being hit accidentally by traffic. Joseph Carter indicated that MoDOT feels the road by the site has enough of a shoulder and there is enough visibility around the nearby curve for this not to be an issue. He then offered to check with MoDOT to determine if the agency has an agreement with Waynesville that the city will maintain the site.

Lynn Morrow moved to designate the pillar as “Frog Rock.” The motion was seconded by Gary Kremer. A majority voted in favor. Amy Moorman and Tim Schmidt were opposed, both citing the liability concern. Joe Carter abstained from the vote, citing his employment with MoDOT.

### **Cave Name Designations**

Dwight Weaver explained that in 1960, Jerry Vineyard and the Missouri Speleological Survey established criteria to record caves within the state. These criteria have not always been followed, however, leading to confusion surrounding cave names and locations. Although the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is now in the possession of the list, there has been little effort to legitimize those cave names recorded on it. Weaver then suggested that the MOBGN form a committee to look into the possibility of officially adding these caves to the Geographic Names Information System (GNIS).

Jane Messenger stated that many of the state’s caves are already in GNIS, but most users are not allowed access to the records due to safety and privacy concerns. She then stated that if she is provided with the Missouri Speleological Survey’s list, she could have a USGS co-worker compare it against GNIS to find which caves are not officially named. Dwight Weaver replied there is apprehension about doing this, but that the Missouri Speleological Survey is considering transferring the original case files of the caves on the list from the Department of Natural Resources facility in Rolla to the Missouri State Archives. John Dougan indicated that if the Missouri State Archives received the files, restrictions would remain in place to prevent public access.

Dwight Weaver asked Jane Messenger how she would recommend proceeding. Messenger replied that she needs an electronic copy of the cave list, and that once received, she will pass it along to a member of the GNIS working group to compare against those caves already in the system. Once the caves that are not in the system have been identified, the naming process can begin.

Tony Spicci asked why the little researched cave names compiled by the Missouri Speleological Survey should be entered into GNIS if the database records are closed to the public. Chris Barnett replied that it would serve as a backup in case the Survey disbanded or the files currently in the possession of DNR were lost or destroyed.

To lessen the Missouri Speleological Survey's apprehension about providing the USGS with a copy of their cave list, Jane Messenger stated she would contact the GNIS coordinator in an attempt to obtain a list of Missouri caves already in the system, and that she would then pass this along to Dwight Weaver to compare against that of the Survey.

Chris Barnett asked Jane Messenger if the Missouri Speleological Survey's documentation would count as an official GNIS source if the new caves are added to the system. Jane Messenger replied that she believes so, but that she needs to check with the GNIS working group to be certain. John Dougan stated that he believes the Missouri Speleological Survey should determine which caves are submitted for naming by the board, and not the board itself. Jane Messenger replied that if the Missouri Speleological Survey is recognized by GNIS as an official source, the names on the list that are not currently in the system would be added automatically, without the need for submitting proposals to the board. Chris Barnett asked what would happen if a cave already in GNIS was identified by a different name on the Missouri Speleological Survey's list. Jane replied that the Survey's name would be entered as a variant.

Chris Barnett asked Jane Messenger to send Dwight Weaver the list of Missouri caves in GNIS prior to the next meeting of the board. Jane Messenger replied that she would try to obtain the list from the GNIS working group, but she is uncertain about whether she will be successful due to internal USGS restrictions.

## **Potential Updates to Bylaws:**

### **1) Interim Committee Formation**

John Dougan indicated that he and Brian Rogers would continue to work with the executive committee to draft language specifically allowing for the formation of interim committees, and that this should be ready for review prior to the board's next meeting in November.

### **2) Use of Teleconferences**

John Dougan stated that the MOBGN bylaws do not specifically provide for the use of teleconferencing for official board business, but they do state the board will convene in a manner determined by the Office of the Missouri Secretary of State. He went on to explain that the current administration finds the use of teleconferences for the conducting of official board business to be acceptable, so currently, there is no reason to change the bylaws.

Chris Barnett asked the board for feedback regarding the use of teleconferences. Lynn Morrow replied that he prefers the board meet in person, but he sees the value in their occasional use.

Jane Messenger agreed that she would prefer to meet in person, stating that teleconferences are prohibitive to discussion. Tony Spicci added that because the board meets so infrequently, there is little reason to use teleconferences, except when quick decisions are required. John Dougan stated that he agrees with the feedback, but does not want to entirely preclude the use of teleconferences in instances where there is little board business.

### **3) Non-convened Voting**

John Dougan stated the Office of the Missouri Secretary of State legal staff has indicated that they do not want boards to conduct official business through non-convened, or proxy, voting. Therefore, the bylaws do not need to be updated. Joseph Carter asked about the possibility of using collaborative software, such as WebEx, for meetings. John Dougan explained that the Office does not support the use of this sort of software either. Jane Messenger added that the board's citizen members should not be asked to pay the software licensing fees required for a service like WebEx.

John Dougan indicated that following each MOBGN meeting, Brian Rogers would provide a copy of the draft minutes to Jane Messenger to pass along to the USBGN chief of staff. In this manner, the USBGN can take action on the MOBGNs naming decisions prior to the approval of the minutes, which requires a full meeting of the board.

### **MOBGN Website & Brochure**

John Dougan stated Missouri State Archives staff now have the ability to update the MOBGN website, and that he, Brian Rogers and the executive committee plan to draft updated language. This language will also be used to develop a brochure intended to increase the number of naming proposals submitted to the board.

Lynn Morrow left the meeting at 12:35 p.m.

Shelly Silch cautioned the board about soliciting unwarranted proposals, citing a professor of geography in Illinois who required students to submit naming proposals to the state board without providing adequate documentation. John Dougan added that any language drafted by the board needs to explicitly explain the criteria that must be fulfilled for proposals to be reviewed.

Shelly Silch and Chris Barnett asked about the possibility of receiving naming proposals through the MOBGN website. John Dougan replied that this may be possible at some future point, but he suggests first focusing on updating the website and brochure language. Jane Messenger asked about the possibility of allowing the public to comment on proposals coming before the board. John Dougan replied that this, again, might be a future possibility. Jane Messenger then stated that the board may want to look to the website of Montana's SHRAB for guidance in how to do this. Brian Rogers interjected that online comments may be problematic if they are visible to the public. Tim Schmidt agreed, indicating that it may lead to unwanted controversy. John Dougan

stated that comments submitted electronically would not be visible through the website. Chris Barnett added that, per the bylaws, comments could not be received any later than 45 days prior to a meeting.

### **2016 Council of Geographic Naming Authorities Meeting**

Jane Messenger reported that the 2016 COGNA conference was held May 3-7 in Reno, Nevada. The main topic discussed with relevance to the board, is the increasing presence of SHRAB communications committees. These groups are responsible for increasing the visibility of SHRAB naming decisions in their various states. Messenger then asked the board if they would be interested in forming such a committee. John Dougan asked if these committees are publicizing the board's decisions after they are made, or bringing attention to the naming proposals. Jane Messenger replied that they are publicizing proposals. John Dougan then stated that the Office of the Missouri Secretary of State's communications staff does a good job of publicizing decisions once made, and that they could also be asked to help publicize naming proposals before they are decided upon.

Chris Barnett asked Jane Messenger if any states have other strategies for increasing public visibility of their SHRABs. Jane Messenger replied that some SHRABs hold public informational meetings, or move their official meetings to various locations around their state to increase localized public feedback. John Dougan indicated that the increase in board travel expenses might be prohibitive.

Jane Messenger asked John Dougan if the Friends of the Missouri State Archives' Thursday Evening Speaker Series might be able to accommodate a board member discussing the role of the board and its accomplishments. John Dougan replied that these programs are generally based on books and/or film documentaries, so he is not sure the Friends would be interested. Shelly Silch then asked if the board has a representative looking for opportunities to expand its visibility. John Dougan replied no, but that he mentions the board in relevant speaking engagements around the state. Dougan then stated that the board should probably wait until the website and brochure language is updated before looking into further opportunities for publicity.

Jane Messenger then brought up several points related to discussions earlier in the meeting. Regarding the naming of features, she stated the USBGN distinguishes between local support for a name and local usage, with greater weight given to local support. She then asked federal agency designees to contact their superiors when proposals in their jurisdictions are put forward to the board. Finally, Jane Messenger brought up the offensive nature of the word "squaw" in Missouri feature names, stating that a representative from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approached her at the 2016 COGNA conference about changing the name of Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge. Chris Barnett asked if the USBGN has indicated they want SHRABs to change these feature names preemptively. Jane Messenger replied no, but indicated the USBGN would not approve any new names containing language considered ethnically offensive.

She also indicated there is new federal legislation requiring features identified by ethnically offensive names to be changed, although “squaw” is not one of the terms deemed offensive. Chris Barnett then stated that if there is no direction to change these names coming from the USBGN, the board should keep its current position of waiting until a proponent comes forward before taking any action. John Dougan concurred, adding that if state agencies maintain land with these features, the name change proposals should be left to them to put forward. Dougan then asked Jane Messenger to provide a list of Missouri feature names containing the terms deemed offensive by the federal government prior to the board’s next meeting.

Jane Messenger reported that the 2017 COGNA conference will be the week of May 9 in Richmond, Virginia. Chris Barnett indicated the board will discuss who to send as its representative at the next meeting.

### **Discussion of Next Meeting**

Chris Barnett stated that the bylaws indicate the board will next meet on the second Thursday in November (November 10) and asked John Dougan if there are any scheduling conflicts. Dougan replied that the Missouri State Archives has a program in the interpretive center on the evening of November 10, so it might be better to schedule the meeting on either November 3 or November 17. Jane Messenger then interjected that she thinks it would be a good idea to hold a workshop, taught by her, on the role/function of the MOBGN. John Dougan concurred, suggesting that it be held immediately before the next meeting. November 3, 2016 was then selected, with the board citing potential holiday conflicts with the other date.

### **Motion to Adjourn**

Tim Schmidt moved to adjourn the meeting. No second required. Meeting adjourned.