

## **Mastodon, Sandy Creek Covered Bridge, and Gov. Daniel Dunklin's Grave State Historic Sites**

Town Hall Public Meeting

September 23, 2023 at 2:00 PM

Presented by Ken Smith, Superintendent

**Invitees:** Hon. Mary Elizabeth Coleman, Hon. Renee Reuter, Hon. Gary Bonacker, Hon. Ken Waller.

The Hon. Gary Bonacker attended.

County Councilman Charles Groeteke attended. Also in attendance was regular attendee Matt Schraut, who has property abutting Sandy Creek Covered Bridge SHS

**State Park Personnel in attendance:** Dan (Castlewood) and Kelly Dunn (Mastodon), Mastodon FTE Emily Lange and Jeff Darr, Park Ranger David McCarty and Deputy East Region Director Maria Potter.

Advertisements were posted in the local paper and online. Staff also discussed with archaeological society and scouting groups.

### **Summary of presentation:**

Using PowerPoint presentation, I introduced myself and explained the meeting is to inform about the three sites and update what we accomplished over the past year and are looking to accomplish over the next year. Also stated the other main purpose is to get feedback from the public to try to make visitor experience the best it can be.

- 1) Went over Site staff, division staff, staff who had left and our specific supporting organizations.
- 2) Discussed the missions of all three sites and the included data sheets. On data sheets, I indicated that the operations budget reflects projects, regular operations and wages. Also pointed out the visitation statistics and revenues. I stated when considering the tax revenue generated, we also need to consider visitor purchases before they come to the site - food, gas, drinks, etc., and the local revenues that generates as well. Councilman Groeteke did ask about the fees that are charged for museum visitors and when it was last raised. I pointed out the last raise in fees was 2008 from \$2.50 to the current \$4. Mr. Dunn asked about \$5 and I did respond that in comparison to other similar facilities within the division and locally (static museums, self-guided tour), we have the only fee. Emily also pointed out that many people balk at the \$4 for adults only fee and \$5 would make more people less likely to go through.
- 3) Discussion about Mastodon projects:
  - a. ADA Entrance: talked about the coordination and implementation efforts that Asst. Supt. Josh LaMouria did for the project. Showed all of the Missouri State Parks staff who assisted with the project. Pictures documented the progress of the project in its various aspects. Councilman Groeteke asked about the slope of the ramp. I responded that there are 12' runs that are 8.3% grade. After each 12' run, there is a platform before the next slope. I informed attendees that the 8.3% is the max allowable ADA slope.
  - b. Seckman Road: Described the phases and what is planned at this time. Talked about the overall purpose of the project, new picnic area entrance, preservation of the springs, and that projected completion is early fall of 2024. Question was asked

- about the current impact. Just that it takes longer to get to picnic area with traffic lights, but we are excited to see it happen.
- c. Other projects: Pointed out our extra efforts to keep Rock Creek free of trash and increasing Stream Team efforts. Presented about Eagle Scout projects: replacing wood on benches, installing mile markers on Limestone Hill Trail, adding gravel to trails. We are also expanding the items we have available in our resale area.
  - d. Discussed the division-wide hazard tree survey and removal.
- 4) Discussion about Sandy Creek projects
- a. Brent and Butch Myers retiring from caretakers. Although they were not in attendance, I expressed appreciation for their years of service. We have been increasing our presence with multiple visits each week to clean. Automatic gates have been installed so we do not have to open/close daily. Emily has been increasing interpretive presence, and rangers have been increasing their presence as well.
  - b. Introduced Mr. Schraut to Emily. His property offers easier access to one of the shelter caves. He is good with us getting in, just advise him ahead of time. We did discuss some of the recent happenings. We are hoping to work more with Mr. Schraut to keep an eye on the shelter cave.
  - c. Councilman Groeteke did ask about the security system, especially with the number of vandal incidents at Jefferson County Parks, including the recent restroom destruction. Responded that it does not function as it was struck by lightning. We need to upgrade and get back up and running, but it is costly. We have used game cameras. Large issue with the security system is no cameras on gate or new parking lot. I did state that rangers have increased presence and at both Mastodon and Sandy Creek, local sheriff deputies visit a lot to write reports. Ranger McCarty agreed that he prefers to write reports at Sandy Creek because it is quiet and the law enforcement presence keeps out less desirable elements.
  - d. Increasing interpretive presence with touch table a couple times a month and NASA program
- 5) Dunklin's Grave
- a. Talked about striving to get the grass to grow on hillside, but weather does not cooperate.
  - b. Ongoing erosion issues and efforts to repair walkways.
  - c. Emily and I will be revisiting the replacement of the interpretive panel.
- 6) Emily presented on interpretive efforts and stewardship.
- a. Presented 105 programs to several thousand visitors.
  - b. Pointed out all of the new offerings: Mondays at Mastodons, Toddler Thursdays, S'mores and Stories, Friday Skull Shows, Guided Hikes.
  - c. Increasing field trip programs, especially on Mondays and Tuesdays. Extremely popular when combined with MPRA bus grant program
  - d. Stewardship: 99 hours at Mastodon and 600 at Sandy Creek. We are looking at increasing efforts to remove honeysuckle and other invasives. A good indicator of the impact of just the 99 Mastodon hours is how clear the area on the Wildflower Trail is. Maria asked Emily to forward her interpretive statistics for future tracking.
- 7) Upcoming projects:
- a. Mastodon: residence improvements, playground and parking lot improvements, special-use area amenities, restart collection relocation efforts, education programs, and Seckman Road.
  - b. Sandy Creek: Security issues, tree mitigation and programs offerings
  - c. Dunklin's Grave: Erosion issues, grass issues and interpretive panel.
- 8) Discussion:

- a. Rep. Bonacker congratulated all of the Missouri State Parks and Historic Sites, as we have such a wonderful and clean system.
- b. Councilman Groeteke asked if we work with the riverboats that dock at Kimmswick. I explained that we do and I did send in the paperwork to participate again this year, but the river was too low for any boats to dock. When they come, we do short interpretive presentations and then are available to answer questions as visitors go through the museum.
- c. There was also a substantial conversation between Maria Potter, Ranger McCarty, and Councilman Groetike regarding security issues as we were letting out. Meeting ended around 3 p.m.

Although lightly attended, attendees were interested in the topics and offered.