MINUTES OF PUBLIC MEETING HELD DECEMBER 2, 2009 AT
ALSIP PARK DISTRICT APOLLO RECREATION CENTER, 12521 SOUTH KOSTNER AVENUE, ALSIP, ILLINOIS, RE ILLINOIS & MICHIGAN NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN PROCESS

The meeting began at 7:00 p.m.. Mr. Dennis Bieschke opened the meeting by introducing himself and explaining the purpose of the meeting, which was to begin gathering input from members of the public for the development of a management plan for the Illinois & Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor. Mr. Bieschke then asked that each person introduce himself or herself, state what town he or she was from, and, if he or she is affiliated with an organization or is representing an organization, to state that information as well. About 20 persons were present, including representatives of the Chicago Southland Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Calumet Heritage Partners, Friends of the Cal-Sag Canal and several private citizens.

Mr. Bieschke then introduced Ms. Ana Koval, President of Canal Corridor Association ("CCA"). Ms. Koval presented a PowerPoint slide show about the history of the National Heritage Corridor, CCA, the 1984 legislation and the 2006 legislation which re-authorized the National Heritage Area and designated CCA as the local coordinating entity for the management plan development. She noted that the completion of a general management plan is one of the National Park Service requirements for all National Heritage Areas, and that funds have been recently appropriated by Congress for the planning process. Ms. Koval also commented that the limited funding which Congress has approved was required to be matched by other funds raised by CCA so that donations would be welcome.

Ms. Koval's presentation included the following: The Heritage Corridor includes 49 communities, is approximately 100 miles long and encompasses approximately 450 square miles. The 96 miles long I&M Canal was the last great American canal, connecting the east coast to the Mississippi River, thereby opening up major markets for Midwestern farmers, lumber and mining companies and manufacturers, as well as creating access for products from the Atlantic seaboard to the expanding middle of America. The canal opened in 1848, the same year that the board of trade opened in Chicago, and the canal was the catalyst that caused Chicago to become a major city. Chicago rapidly became a major transportation hub with the addition of railroads and the Cal-Sag Canal. The I&M Canal continued in active use until the twentieth century, when the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal (1900) replaced it on the east and the Illinois Waterway on the west (1933). Illinois continues to have considerable commercial activity on water including canals and the Illinois Waterway. When the Stevenson Expressway was constructed, the Chicago portion of the I&M canal was filled in. The remaining canal runs from Hodgkins to LaSalle, although the portion through downtown Joliet is also now gone. CCA was founded in 1982 for the purpose of redeveloping the canal corridor using its natural, cultural, and historic resources and in 1984 President Reagan signed the legislation creating the I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor as the first national heritage area on earth. There are now 48 other national heritage areas in the United States, making 49 in all.

An audience member inquired about one of the slides showing a map of the Heritage Corridor which didn't seem correct to him. Ms. Koval mentioned that in 1993 Professor Michael Conzen of The University of Chicago participated in preparing a study of the Corridor's boundaries

which resulted in a proposal for enlarging the Heritage Corridor and that the map in the slide could have been the proposed 1993 expansion, especially with respect to the area east of Harlem Avenue.

Mr. Bieschke then began the discussion part of the meeting by describing the planning process, which will include public meetings like this one to get civic involvement and input, meetings beginning in January with 'partnering' organizations such as representatives from the communities in the corridor, using a website to post drafts and ask for feedback, and also creating a blog about the management plan effort. Ms. Koval said that CCA had sent more than 150 letters to potential partnering organizations and that if anyone present had ideas about who else to invite, to please let her know. Mr. Bieschke said that CCA would take the ideas generated in the public meetings and put together drafts of the vision statement, the mission statement and the guiding principles, and eventually the other parts of the plan, for all to read on the website. After drafts are reviewed and revisions made to incorporate comments received, the plan would be finalized sometime in mid-2010 and sent to the Secretary of the Department of the Interior for review and approval. Once the plan receives approval from the Secretary, implementation would begin. Tonight CCA was seeking input concerning vision, mission and guiding principles. Mr. Bieschke also commented that four by six cards and pens had been distributed to the audience so that, as the discussion progressed from one topic to the next, if someone thought of an additional comment on an earlier topic they could write it on a card so that it would be included in the meeting minutes.

The first topic for discussion was to talk about a vision for the Corridor. Mr. Bieschke said that, according to the National Park Service, a vision "articulates a region's concept of what they want the heritage area to be in the future. It describes the kind of place the heritage area should be." He asked "What do we want the Corridor to be?" Many ideas were suggested, including the following:

- Have a trail which included open intermodal connections throughout the Corridor
- Increase tourism and commercial amenities along the canal -- places to eat, for example
- Make connections to another state and federal parks, national shores
- Establish an interest for international visitors to see the ecology, cultural, history and educational programming
- Provide way for the Corridor to be a living history museum
- Make the Corridor a connector between the area's history and its waterways
- Capture and communicate the various histories along the entire Corridor, including those of our native Americans
- Provide transportation options to all areas in the Corridor
- Become the image and identity of the towns and places in the Corridor and make it a premiere regional destination
- There should be fun all around
- The Corridor should be exciting for all
- Encourage appreciation of diversity of the past, present and future

- Support and build on healthy local economic development
- Make the Corridor self sustaining

Mr. Bieschke used large white sheets of paper on an easel to list all of these ideas and they were posted on the room's wall so that all could see them. At the end of this part of the meeting, he presented the vision statement from the Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area ("FFNHA").

> Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area is an internationally recognized region in western Missouri and eastern Kansas where a young nation's diverse definitions of freedom collided. Through sharing authentic and honestly interpreted stories, residents respect multiple views of freedom. Compelling learning experiences, interpretation, and preservation offer visitors and residents of all ages an understanding of the region's importance. Historically aware citizens collaborate to build diverse economies for current and future generations.

Mr. Bieschke then directed the discussion to the topic of creating a mission statement. He said that the mission statement should be about how we would like to make the vision into a reality. According to the National Park Service, "the mission articulates how the local coordinating entity and other partners in the heritage area intend to make the vision a reality. It describes the heritage area's purpose." He presented the mission statements from the management plans for Blue Ridge National Heritage Area ("BRNHA") and FFNHA:

> The mission of the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area is to protect, preserve, interpret, and develop the unique natural, historical, and cultural resources of Western North Carolina for the benefit of present and future generations, and in so doing to stimulate improved economic opportunity in the region.
>
> Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area is dedicated to building awareness of the struggles for freedom in western Missouri and eastern Kansas. These diverse, interwoven, and nationally important stories grew from a unique physical and cultural landscape. FFNHA inspires respect for multiple perspectives and empowers residents to preserve and share these stories. We achieve our goals through interpretation, preservation, conservation, and education for all residents and visitors.

In the discussion that followed, people suggested that the BRNHA mission was good, but that it would be better to start with the topic of economic development. Audience members also thought that sharing the stories of the Corridor should be part of the mission. Further discussion emphasized the following:

- Stimulate increased economic development
- Implement marketing – regional, national and international
- Capture the stories to share and communicate
- Inspire the human experience through development of enriching destinations

At the end of this part, Mr. Bieschke suggested the following as a possible mission statement that had come out of the meetings held in Morris, Lemont, LaSalle and Channahon in November "To

protect, preserve, interpret and develop the natural, historical and cultural resources of the Corridor, tell the story of the canal and how it changed the area, and to stimulate increased economic opportunity in the Corridor." Mr. Bieschke told the audience to check the website (soon to be up and running) for the first draft of a mission statement and asked that people post their comments.

The discussion then turned to listing possible projects that could be undertaken as part of the mission. Suggestions included the following:

- Pave the trail
- Create and run guided tours
- Great a map with connections and key destinations
- Create canal related local festivals
- Create interest in all towns – with economic development/recreation
- Improve the tow path trail all the way along the Corridor
- Make it a real canal
- Create visitor centers for information on local history
- Increase continuity on "Wayfinding"
- Add map signage on the trail
- Develop market place analysis for the Corridor
- Develop a safe way marked through Joliet

Mr. Bieschke then directed the final portion of the meeting to considering guiding principles for developing and implementing the management plan. He noted that guiding principles are traits or qualities that are considered worthwhile, that represent our highest priorities and driving forces – how we will value visitors, suppliers, partners and the members of the Corridor community. They describe fundamental values and the actions to put those values into use. In response, members of the group proposed the following:

- Respect for native Americans' history and heritage
- Respect for the environment
- Active advocacy for conservation and preservation
- Accessibility for all users
- Foster healthy social/human interaction
- Encourage local economic development and participation
- Treat all places as being of equal importance
- Respect public and private property
- Embrace international participation
- Have sustainable use of resources

- Actively encourage fit lifestyle activities
- Use email and similar means of reaching out (such as Facebook/LinkedIn)

For comparison, Mr. Bieschke then presented the guiding principles of FFNHA and said that we seemed to have covered most of the same points, except that last one:

1. We will be tolerant and respectful of diverse stories from multiple perspectives.
2. We will respect property rights.
3. We will focus on authentic and engaging experiences.
4. We will honor the region's peoples, past and present.
5. We will appreciate the unique cultural and historic assets within the nationally important landscape.
6. We will invest in community engagement, education and empowerment.
7. We will sustain and grow sense of place.
8. We will value and protect the natural environment.
9. We will consider future generations in everything we do.

At this point, Mr. Bieschke began to wrap up the meeting. He thanked everyone for coming and asked what would be the best way to communicate with people. Most people expressed a preference for email, although a few said they like regular mail. Mr. Bieschke also asked for ideas about how CCA can get the message out about the planning process to more people and several suggestions were made. Overall, it was felt that more people would participate if there is a constant effort to reach out and build a sense of civic pride and awareness to all socio-economic groups and people of all ages in the corridor. Mr. Bieschke reminded people to use the four by six cards to write down any additional suggestions, thoughts, comments or ideas that they wanted to share and give them to him, and many people did give him cards.

Mr. Andrew Connor, CCA's Chairman, the spoke briefly to recap the meetings' themes, thank Mr. Bieschke for leading the meeting and the audience for attending and urge people to stay involved in the process of creating the Management Plan.

The meeting then adjourned at 8:30 p.m.