



Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity

JB Pritzker, Governor

Illinois Route 66 Centennial Commission Meeting May 17, 2022

Meeting called to order by Chair Cory Jobe at 2:01 p.m.

“Today is Tuesday, May 17, 2022. We have assembled the platform for us to conduct today’s Commission meeting in person and by WebEx in order to attend to matters and comply with Executive Orders. This meeting is being conducted with a remote option pursuant to Section 7 of the Open Meetings Act which permits remote meetings when certain conditions are met. The Governor has issued a disaster declaration due to the circumstances related to the Covid-19 pandemic. I, as the Chairman of the Illinois Route 66 Centennial Commission, find that conducting an in-person meeting for some members not practical because of the disaster, all members of the Illinois Route 66 Centennial Commission have verified that they can hear the discussion and testimony, members of the public are able to hear the meeting contemporaneously via the DCEO website, all votes will be conducted by roll call, notice of the meeting was posted prior to 48 hours before the meeting, and a verbatim record of the meeting is being recorded and will be available to the public.”

Members present: Chair Cory Jobe; Rep. Tim Butler; Bonnie McDonald; Bob Navarro; Rep. Larry Walsh Jr.; Casey Claypool; Director Colleen Callahan; Kristin DiCenso, Director Sylvia Garcia; and Deputy Director Karla Flannery

Others present: Aaron Stein, Kate Exo, Cameron Mock, Kate Lindgren, Jan Kemmerling

Chair Cory Jobe thanked everyone in attendance and asked that DCEO and Governor’s Office assist with getting some of the vacant positions on the Commission filled as some ex officio agency designees have retired since being appointed by their agency and still need the two positions appointed by Senate President Harmon filled. Kate indicated she would bring up at next boards and commissions meeting.

Director Garcia announced that DCEO was excited to award \$4 million in grants to four convention and visitors bureaus along Route 66 for projects to start the lay the groundwork in 2022 and on into 2023

Deputy Director Karla Flannery gave a brief description of the projects that were funded through the DCEO grant program:

Springfield CVB – create a metaverse experience at Route History Museum as well as some components for the Gate 2 project at the Illinois State Fairgrounds;

Heritage Corridor CVB – integrated statewide marketing campaign for the entire 300 miles of the Illinois portion of Route 66; welcome center in Joliet; two charging stations – one in Wilmington and one in Pontiac and multiple route 66 signage displays in many Route 66 communities;
Great Rivers & Routes CVB – West End service station project in Edwardsville to become Route 66 visitors center and Old Cannonball jail project as well as murals and monuments throughout the region; and,
Visit Oak Park CVB – electric vehicle charging stations along Ogden Avenue in Berwyn and muffler men art installation in Berwyn

Deputy Director Karla Flannery also updated the group on the Middle of Everything tourism campaign launched on April 18 by Governor Pritzker. The \$30 million tourism campaign provides a balance of promoting Chicago and downstate to 8 regional states as well as a national cable buy, digital marketing, print, out-of-home and streaming radio. We will also be having partnerships and activations with some major brands to tap into their fan base such as the Chicago Cubs, Chicago Bears, Big10, Pride Parade to name a few.

Casey Claypool provided an update from the Illinois Scenic Byway – things are finally starting to happen and 90+ communities are working together as one product. Through the DCEO TAP grant, they are able to have two neons – replicas of the original Abraham Lincoln Motel sign and a 45 ft tall Illinois Route 66 while shield – will all be lit at night – and make a big first impression. The whole Gate 2 project to showcase the entirety of Route 66 from beginning to end will be completed in 24-30 mos. This will provide support to all 90+ communities. Starting to work with field trips and bus tours interested in visiting Route 66 sites. They have a 10-year contract with the State Fairgrounds and it will be open 365 days a year. Also received money through Springfield CVB's Route 66 grant which will also help with this project as well as some marketing materials. Will be applying for a \$700,000 grant from the Federal Highway Administration Scenic Byway program to create a new interpretive master plan as well as a campaign to promote the byway as a whole. Looking at the economic development and impact to the communities. If they receive, project must be obligated by 2024 and completed by 2029. As soon as Gate 2 project is completed, they will start on this and have completed by the Centennial in 2026. It was mentioned that the Team RED DCEO team can always help with economic development to the communities along the route.

Casey Claypool also provided an update on The Road Ahead Partnership, the national group in place to promote Route 66. They are working on an economic development toolkit on ways to leverage Route 66. Casey and her husband bought Doc's Soda Fountain in Girard and updating it to open, and it will become another iconic stop on the road. Keeping Pharmacy and Soda Fountain intact.

Rep. Butler asked about the National Commission for the Route 66 Centennial. Casey stated that 15 of the 20 have been nominated but no one has been appointed yet. Rep Butler asked if there was an update on the National Historic Trail – Casey indicated it was still sitting in committee. They have submitted many support letters for it.

Bonnie McDonald thanked Casey for the report and said she felt it might be a good idea to have a presence of the Commission members at the State Fair – opportunity to get some public engagement or listening tour to promote to a wider audience of the Commission’s efforts. Casey said she could set up a table in the Gate 2 area for the Centennial Commission.

Rep Butler indicated he liked the idea of a listening event and perhaps use Local Officials Day as a forum to reach communities up and down the route.

It was recommended that we look at alternative dates for the August 2 Commission meeting to coincide with the State Fair dates. The next meeting following the August meeting will be November 15 in Joliet at the Joliet History Museum. Kristin DiCenso said that space is available in Conservation World and could set up in there if needed.

Cory again asked for persons to sign up for the Committees. Would like committees to meet monthly or so virtually in between the quarterly full Commission meeting. Casey Claypool will chair the Wayfinding committee as already working on a study of all the brown signs up and down the route. It was indicated we need IDOT involved with this and need to get a new designee on the Commission from IDOT.

Cory Jobe will Chair the Fundraising/Grants Committee

Bonnie McDonald will Chair the Ceremonies/Events Committee

Rep Butler will Chair the Public Relations Committee

Bob Navarro will Chair the Marketing/Advertising Committee

Director Garcia mentioned that DCEO has the Entrepreneurship, Innovation & Technology group that manage the small business centers throughout the state which may also be a big help as well as the Office of Minority Economic Empowerment in DCEO.

The committees should try and meet monthly and keep Commission meetings quarterly for now and set goals for the Commission

Bill Thomas is serving as Illinois representative on the Road Ahead Partnership and would be a great addition to include.

Kristin DiCenso brought up who would be the repository of things similar to what was done for the Bicentennial. It was mentioned that Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum was planning an exhibit but closer to the actual Centennial dates as well as the Illinois State Museum.

Bonnie McDonald stated she thought the Commission needed a set of values and guiding principles to show equity as part of the work and integrate into the committees – use as a framework to put together the goals.

Cory asked for any Public Comments – there were none

Cory asked that everyone send forward some goals to him as to what should be the point of this Commission

Rep Butler once again reminded everyone that there was a bill on Governor's desk regarding the Illinois America 250 Commission Act – also in 2026 – establishing a state commission

There was a call for adjournment and Bob Navarro moved and Kristin DiCenso seconded.