

**Advisory Commission on the Mississippi State Flag and the
Mississippi Coat-of-Arms
September 18, 2000, 1:30 p.m.
Room 113, New Capitol Building**

Members present: Representative Ed Blackmon
Senator Terry Burton
Senator Mike Chaney
Senator Hillman Frazier
Larry Fry
Representative Steve Holland
Fran Ivy
Don Kilgore
Vanessa Long
Lisa Milner
Jean Moore
Jack Reed
John Tatum
Dolphus Weary
William Winter

Members absent: Representative Wanda Jennings
J.L. Holloway

Others present: Jim Giles
A.E. Griffing and guests
Anthony Hervey and guests
Clay Moss
Kelly Riley, Office of the Governor
Dr. David Sansing
Greg Stewart
Stone Barefield

Chairman William Winter called the meeting to order at 1:40 p.m.

Upon motion of Senator Frazier, seconded by Jean Moore, the Advisory Commission approved the minutes of its August 21st meeting.

Chairman Winter expressed thanks to the large number of constituents that have expressed an interest in the work of the Commission and stated that the Commission cannot proceed in a satisfactory manner without the contributions of such citizens. Winter reminded the Commission that its task is not to impose anything on the citizenry of the state, but is simply called on as an advisory commission to gather information for reporting a design for the state flag to the Governor, Lieutenant Governor and Speaker of the House. He hopes the Commission will do so in a manner that will unify the state because we cannot let the issue of the flag interfere with the progress of the state.

Winter called on the chairman of each committee to report on the activities of his/her committee since the August 21st meeting.

Dolphus Weary reported that the Committee on History and Heritage has begun the process of listening to appropriate organizations and individuals with special interest in and knowledge of the state's history and the relationship and interpretation of that history through its flag and coat-of-arms. The committee has met with the Sons of Confederate Veterans and the Sons and Daughters of U.S. Colored Troops. Weary stated that the committee is in a fact finding mode and is considering each organization's opinions, facts and emotions. The committee has also initiated a high school survey project on the issue of the state flag and hopes the survey might spread to college campuses.

Don Kilgore reported that the Committee on Economic Impact met on August 30 and also conducted a conference call on September 13. The committee has corresponded with the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce as to the flag issue in that state. The committee is exchanging ideas with the State of Georgia as well. The committee is sampling CEOs and Presidents of national businesses as to their business relationship with our state and whether the flag influences their doing business with Mississippi. Kilgore also reported that the Mississippi Economic Council (MEC) is conducting focus groups around the state and that the flag is one of the issues addressed and discussed at each focus group. Kilgore anticipates the MEC providing a formal presentation for the Commission on its findings.

Fran Ivy reported that the Committee on Design met on August 30 to discuss ideas for citizens' participation in recommending a design for the state flag. Ivy presented the committee's suggestion for a challenge to young Mississippians, as our state's future leaders, to participate. The Committee on Design suggested that the Commission invite all public, private and parochial high school students in the state to submit responses to an invitation to participate in the Commission's work. Such responses may include specific flag designs, essays and papers on what the flag should symbolize and views as to whether the old flag should be changed. Students will have until November 15, 2000, to submit responses. Each individual student, student organization or student body participating in this process would receive an official Certificate of Participation from the Advisory Commission.

Upon questioning and comment from Commission members, the Commission decided that it should be clearly stated that this is not a contest and no awards will be presented. The Commission also hopes that this invitation will prove to be an educational experience for students by having them research and learn the history of the flag, as well as the parts of a flag. Any outstanding component of a student's design or essay could be used if a new flag should be designed.

Upon motion of Jean Moore, seconded by Senator Burton, the Advisory Commission approved Committee on Design's recommendation as stated above.

Senator Chaney shared with the Commission a copy of the letter he sent to Governor Winter proposing that the Commission discharge and recommend to the Governor and the Legislature the adoption by statute of the official Coat of Arms of 1894 through 1906, and being the same coat of arms traditionally accepted as official and displayed in the Chambers of the Mississippi House of Representatives and Senate.

Senator Chaney entered this proposal as a motion, which was seconded by Don Kilgore. Chairman Winter recognized Senator Frazier for a question. Frazier stated that he would like to have more time to receive input from citizens on the coat of arms. Senators Blackmon and Burton suggested the Commission needed more time. Chairman Winter suggested that the question of the coat of arms be put on special order for the Commission's next meeting. Senator Chaney agreed with Chairman Winter's suggestion, but stated that he would like any recommendation of the Commission to be subject to approval by the Mississippi Supreme Court. The Commission expressed unanimous consent to place this item under special order for its next meeting.

Chairman Winter announced that a post office box address had been obtained for the public to submit written comments to the Advisory Commission. All comments should be addressed to “Flag Commission, P.O. Box 139, Jackson, MS 39205-0139.”

The Advisory Commission discussed the need for public hearings throughout the state to obtain comments from citizens. Representative Blackmon suggested that each hearing be taped so that its discussions and comments may be heard by Advisory Commission members unable to attend a particular hearing. Don Kilgore inquired as to the format of the hearings and Chairman Winter stated that he would hope at least one representative of each of the Commission’s committees would attend each hearing. Senator Burton suggested one hearing in each Congressional District with citizens able to submit written comments at the hearing as well as verbal comments. Fran Ivy suggested inviting area legislators to each hearing.

Upon motion of Senator Burton, seconded by Jean Moore, the Advisory Commission approved the holding of one public hearing in each of the five Congressional districts before November 15, 2000, with the format to be developed and announced to the public.

Chairman Winter suggested holding the hearings in Tupelo, Greenwood, Meridian, Jackson and on the Gulf Coast. Pending the availability of facilities in these areas, the specific date, time and location of each hearing will be arranged and then publicized to the Advisory Commission and the public.

Representative Holland reminded Commission members that they are 17 distinct individuals and that when one member speaks, he or she is not speaking for all Commission members. He favors a referendum on the issue, but he hopes that the public will not misconstrue the purpose of the Commission, which to advise and that the ultimate decision as to the state flag rests with the Legislature.

Lisa Milner stated that she sees the purpose of input from the public, both in the hearings and through written comments, being instrumental in the work of the Commission being that of healing rather than divisiveness.

The Commission will next meet on Wednesday, October 18th, in Room 216 of the capitol.

The Commission adjourned at approximately 3:15 p.m.

The above minutes were adopted by the Advisory Commission on the Mississippi State Flag and the Mississippi Coat-of-Arm at its October 18, 2000, meeting.