

River Parishes Tourist Commission
Meeting Minutes
August 19, 2009

Meeting Attendance

Present: Paul Aucoin, Delores Florent, Mike Norton, Nancy Robert, Nicole Veillon

Absent: Betty Haydel, Peter Jasper, Judy Songy

Staff: Kimmie Carlos, Coy St. Pierre, Jay Tusa

Stakeholders/Guests: Tom Binon (Hampton Inn), Stephanie Boh (Marketing Etc.), Rachael Burns (Holiday Inn Express), Sherry Constance (LTPA), Kim Fontenot (San Francisco Plantation), Amanda Fusco(Cajun Lodging), Louis Giacona (Louis Giacona Advertising), Kevin Kelly (Houmas House), Jesse Lambert (Houmas House), Cathy Matherne (Airboat Tours), Norman Marmillion (Laura Plantation), Vikas Patel (Best Western & LaPlace Motel), Joe Palvado (Compass Marketing), Catherine Schons (Pleasure Bend Nature Tours), Audrey Temple (St. James Welcome Center), Sheilah Wentzell(Quality Inn)

I. Call to order

Chairman Paul Aucoin asked that roll be taken; recognized a quorum and called the meeting to order.

II. Approval of July Minutes

- Paul asked for a motion to approve the July minutes

A motion was made by Mike Norton and seconded by Nicole Veillon to approve the July minutes. The motion was unanimously approved.

III. Monthly Financial Reports

- Comparing the monthly assets in the bank from July 31 to June 30, the cash went down \$21,000
- Paul noted last month we paid the quarterly bill for salaries to St. James Parish
- Hotel/Motel tax went down in St. Charles Parish
- We're right at budget for income
- Jay mentioned that he will be updating the budget for next meeting to reflect Houmas House's membership
- Paul mentioned that he would like to update the budget on a quarterly basis

A motion was made by Nancy Robert and seconded by Mike Norton to approve the July financials. The motion was unanimously approved.

- Paul reviewed the charts
- St. James is holding steady, St. John is doing well and St. Charles has a little drop
- The general ledger was reviewed
- Mike inquired about furniture that was purchased
- Jay mentioned that we purchased a new desk for Kimmie that matched both his and Coy's desk
- Paul reminded Mike that Kimmie was using an old desk that was donated by one of the banks
- Mike asked what was the plan for the older furniture
- Jay mentioned that Paul was interested in it or perhaps selling it
- Mike asked Jay to find out what the state says about properly disposing of the furniture
- Paul reviewed the checking account statement and deposits
- Paul asked about the CTS Holdings, LLC listed on the bank statement for \$10.00
- It was noted that this is in relation to a credit card fee
- Paul asked Jay to look into this since we should be getting a lot of free services
- Mike suggested moving some additional money from the checking into an interest bearing account
- Paul asked Jay to look into moving another \$50,000- \$75,000 from the checking and also to check our balance since we took the CD out
- Paul mentioned that we wrote a letter to St. John's tax collector advising of the numerous RV and trailer parks that were located particularly by Mike Norton and they have already contacted us

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- Paul stated that we need to write a letter to St. Charles Parish which we haven't done yet

A motion was made by Nicole Veillon and seconded by Delores Florent to approve the hotel occupancy tax for July. The motion was unanimously approved.

- Paul asked for an approval for the invoices paid for July.

A motion was made by Mike Norton and seconded by Nancy Robert to approve the invoices paid for July. The motion was unanimously approved.

A motion was made by Mike Norton and seconded by Nancy Robert to go into recess. The motion was unanimously approved.

Break 10:20- 10:30

Meeting was called back to order and Paul asked that the roll be retaken. It was noted that Peter Jasper, Betty Haydel and Judy Songy were absent.

Opening Comments

- Paul welcomed everyone to the beautiful Houmas House and expressed his pleasure at having them as our newest addition to the River Parishes
- Paul introduced some new guests present, Joe Palvado with Compass Marketing, Vikas Patel from Best Western, Amanda Fusco with Cajun Lodging and Kevin Kelly and Jesse Lambert with Houmas House

IV. Director's Report- Jay Tusa

Press Kit

- Jay sent out the press kit via email to most everyone
- This is the first draft of the press kit
- Jay spoke with Norman Marmillion who had some concerns about the press kit
- Jay decided to form a PR committee to help with ideas to get the press kit where we want it
- Jay mentioned that Norman has volunteered to work with him on the press kit
- Jay asked if anyone else was interested in working on the press kit and PR in general

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- Nancy Robert and Kimmie Carlos also volunteered in helping with the press kit and general PR efforts
- Paul asked Jay if there was going to be a press release on Houmas House
- Jay confirmed that was being worked on
- Jay asked if anyone had any suggestions or revisions on the press kit to please let him know
- Trying to get this completed by mid September

Airport Signs

- Louis mentioned that the airport signs are up
- Louis passed around the offer coupons from our attractions that are distributed from the kiosks around the airport

Visitor Center

- We are still moving forward with our visitor center
- We have spoken to each of the three parishes and they have agreed to lend us each an employee to run the visitor center out of the St. John Community Center
- Jay has spoken to LTPA in obtaining brochures from them to put in the visitors center

Brochure/Visitor Guide

- A new brochure/visitor guide is needed
- We are almost out of supply of last year's brochure
- Jay received several bids from different companies to design our new brochure
- Bids were received from Compass Marketing, Great Southern Publishers, Ideas of New Orleans and Louis Giacona Advertising
- Jay would like to do the brochure a bit different than our current one
- Jay would like the new brochure to contain more information such as address, GPS coordinates, payment info, etc.
- We are in the process of obtaining this information from the hotels and restaurants
- In regards to the hotels, we're asking what credit cards they take, are they pet friendly, do they have a laundry facility, etc.
- All this info will be put in one comprehensive guide and also on the new website
- We are looking at expanding the number of pages we currently have to include this information

- We currently have a 12 page brochure but looking to doing a 16 page, up to a 24 page guide
- The proposals for the guide all came in very similar in range
- Compass Marketing came in with a price of \$24,185; Great Southern Publishers came in at \$24,500; Ideas of New Orleans for their design fee is just a little under \$5,000 with the printing will be around \$17,000 - \$20,000 depending on the type of paper we use; Louis' fee for design was \$5,000
- Jay made a recommendation to the board to use Compass Marketing
- Compass has a very good price
- They can do this for us turn key
- Jay feels they can bring a lot to the table
- Jay passed around some of Compass Marketing's work
- They do big state guide and little CVBs
- Paul opened the floor for comments and questions
- Jesse Lambert with Houmas House also recommended Compass Marketing stating she has worked with them before and has always been very impressed with their work and organization

A motion was made by Nancy Robert and seconded by Nicole Veillon to approve hiring Compass Marketing to design our new brochure/visitor's guide. The motion was unanimously approved.

Advertising Report

- Jay mentioned that we came up with a few new ads; we did one for Student Group Tour
- Bright colors and the tag line 'Is History Suppose to be this much Fun?' was used for the ad to create a fun and different look
- In conjunction with the ad, a profile sheet is being created that will duplicate the look of the ad that Kimmie can take with her to SYTA
- For the regional/local publications, thought we'd try something new so in New Orleans Magazine and Louisiana Life we added a calendar of events to the bottom of the ad
- This way people can see what's going on in our area on a quarterly basis
- Jay passed around an ad in Griffon Magazine, which is a military magazine specifically targeted to the military , with the headline 'Sweet Land of History' as the tag line
- Jay mentioned that the new La Tour Guide ad will be sent out in a couple of days for everyone to see

Concierge Reception

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- We will be hosting a mixer for tour guides, concierges and DMCs
- It will be held on September 23 at the Basin Street Station from 5-7 PM
- Tables will be provided for the plantations, swamp tours and restaurants that would like to attend
- We'll have servers hand passing the food
- It's a great way to showcase the area
- We're trying to get restaurants from each parish to showcase the different food we have in the area
- Invitations will be going out the week of August 22nd
- Jay mentioned that if anyone has someone they would like to invite in particular such as a relationship with a tour guide or concierge to please send their name so he can make sure they are on the list
- Norman asked if desk clerks and concierges from the River Parishes were being invited
- Jay mentioned they weren't but would include them

South Central Motorcoach Association (SCMA)Update- Kimmie

- Kimmie reported that the show was wonderful; she met a lot of people in the industry and got a chance to get in front of a lot of tour operators
- The people there were from Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, Georgia, Arkansas and Tennessee
- Kimmie received 18 leads which she attached to her report
- They are interested in craft shows, school programs, ghost tours and food in the area
- Kimmie followed up with them by sending packets with brochures of all of our attractions, hotels, maps and DVD of the area

Upcoming Schedule for RPTC:

- August 20-22: Going on Faith – Grapevine, TX.
- This is a religious conference
- Kimmie has 43 prescheduled appointments with people that want to come to our area
- August 28-Sept 1: Student & Youth Travel Association (SYTA)- Norfolk, VA
- September 2-3: Kimmie will be making sales calls to AAA offices and receptive operators while in Norfolk, VA
- September 13-17: Florida Motorcoach Association (FMA)- Pensacola, FL

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- Kimmie and Rachael Burns with Holiday Inn Express will be traveling together for this show
- September 18-19: Kimmie and Rachael will be making sales calls to AAA offices and receptive operators in conjunction with the show in Pensacola & Ft. Walton Beach, FL & Mobile, AL
- Kimmie attended a Member to Member Expo at NOMCVB August 18
- It was a packed event and a great way to showcase yourself to the community
- Tables were limited and they were sold out in 24 hours but next month will make it a priority to get one
- Kimmie went on a sales call with Rachael Burns to Best Western St. Christopher to see about putting together a package for both our areas
- Kimmie contacted the WWII Museum and they would love to do a package with us
- Jay expressed that he would like to start putting together packages between the River Parishes and outside the area with possibly the zoo or the WWII Museum
- Kimmie co-chaired a table at the Baton Rouge IHG Event on July 28th with Rachael Burns. The IHG group from New Orleans was there and this event was to gain government business for the hotels.
- Jay and Kimmie met with Sharon Alford and her staff from the Houma CVB to see about partnering up to do a regional FAM tour of our area and to share ideas in bringing visitors to SE LA.
- Kimmie met with Sherry Constance to organize an event for the local hotels in the area to explain her role and how she can help our area. The date is tentatively set for September 9th at Armand's Bistro from 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

V. Chairman's Monthly Report- Paul Aucoin

- Paul mentioned that we completed the agreement with Houmas House therefore they are officially on board

Approval of 2009 St. John Center Agreement

- Paul noted that the parish council from St. John approved resigning the contract with the Community Center
- Paul asked for a motion to approve Jay signing the contract with the parish for the community center for another year

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A motion was made by Mike Norton and seconded by Delores Florent to approve the signing of the 2009 St. John Center Agreement. The motion was unanimously approved.

Closing Comments

- The new Louisiana Travel website is online
- Sherry Constance urged everyone to check it out and make sure you are listed
- If you are not listed to please let her know
- Paul feels this is too important for us not to be on this website
- Jay mentioned that he will be discussing with the web committee not only our website but also the La Travel website to make sure we are covered

A motion was made by Mike Norton and seconded by Delores Florent to adjourn the meeting. The motion was unanimously approved.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.