

River Parishes Tourist Commission
Meeting Minutes
August 9, 2011

Meeting Attendance

Present: Paul Aucoin, Dolores Florent, Betty Haydel, Judy Songy, Nicolle Veillon

Absent: Peter Jasper

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

Stakeholders/Guests: Paul Bair (Cajun Pride Swamp Tours), Mary Kliebert (Auberge Du Chene Vert), Jesse Lambert (Houmas House), Norman Marmillion (Laura Plantation), Audrey Temple (St. James Welcome Center), Wynne Waltman (Graham Group), Melissa Wilkins (St. James Parish)

I. Call to order

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

Paul asked if anyone wished to make any public comments on any agenda items to identify themselves at this time. No public comments were made.

II. Approval of July Minutes

- Paul asked for a motion to approve the July minutes.

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

III. Monthly Financial Reports

- Assets for the end of July are \$679,406 which is about a \$2,000 increase from the end of last month

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- Total Liabilities and Net Assets are \$679,000
- Income for the month was budgeted at \$28,000 and \$25,500 were received however we didn't get Houmas House's membership in the bank on time which is the reason for the decrease
- Adding that income we manage to come in above budget with about \$30,000 of income for the month
- For *Expenses Program Services* for July, there was a big difference between the budget which was \$45,000 and \$20,000 that was spent which put us \$25,000 under budget
- This was due to the fact that we didn't spend the anticipated \$29,000 in printing and production for that month
- Jay stated that fee will probably be on next month's financials
- For *Salaries and Benefits* we're on budget for the month
- Total *General & Administrative* for the month, we budgeted \$2,959 and spent \$2,680 so we're close to budget

A motion was made by Nicole Veillon and seconded by Dolores Florent to approve the July financials. The motion was unanimously approved.

- Paul reviewed the charts for the three parishes showing the monthly income
- Paul reviewed the Hotel/Motel chart showing current year actual to budget and prior year actual
- St. James Parish is holding steady at about \$2,000 a month
- St. Charles and St. John Parishes show they take a dip in May in regards to the Spring which is normal

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

- Paul reviewed the General Ledger and Bank Statement
- Beginning balance was \$170,971.47 in addition to the \$500,000 CD totals \$670,000 in the bank
- Deposits totaled \$26,165.81
- Interest earned was \$412.46
- Check written totaled \$24,394.05
- Ending balance per bank was \$173,155.69 with the ending balance per book the same with zero outstanding checks

A motion was made by Betty Haydel and seconded by Judy Songy to approve the bank statement for July. The motion was unanimously approved.

- Paul reviewed the invoices paid and transaction listing for the month

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A motion was made by Judy Songy and seconded by Dolores Florent to approve the invoices paid for July. The motion was unanimously approved.

- Jay mentioned that he was recently out of town however he did email Pernell in regards to getting specifics on inventorying our assets but hasn't heard back from him
- Jay also is working on getting Nicole Veillon added as a signee on our account as Secretary Treasurer

A motion was made by Judy Songy and seconded by Nicole Veillon to go into recess. The motion was unanimously approved.

Break 10:20 - 10:30

A motion was made by Nicole Veillon and seconded by Judy Songy to reconvene. The motion was unanimously approved.

Roll was once again taken; a quorum was recognized and the meeting was called to order and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Opening Comments

- Paul introduced and welcomed our newest attraction being represented by Mary Kliebert
- Paul invited Mary to tell everyone a little about her attraction
- Mary mentioned that she is starting a bed and breakfast in Paulina on River Road next to Paulina Elementary School
- The home consists of three bedrooms with each having it's own bathroom
- There is a large living room and dining room area where breakfast is served
- Those rooms as well as the grounds are available for small parties and weddings
- The name of the bed and breakfast is called Auberge Du Chene Vert which translates to Live Oak Inn
- The house sits on 5 acres with lots of Oak trees on the property
- Paul also welcomed Melissa Wilkins, the Public Information Officer for St. James Parish

IV. Director's Report- Jay Tusa

Advertising & PR Update

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- Jay mentioned that they are still working on some of the ads
- At the last meeting some of the concepts the stakeholders came up with was discussed
- Jay has been in contact with some of the stakeholders and it seems the general consensus is using the clever/cuteness ads such as 'When you need a break from Bourbon Street'
- Currently working on developing that headline with the copy of the other ad
- Still tweaking it so next month Jay expects to have something to show
- Working on the La Tour Guide ad which is due in a couple of week to the state
- This ad will be tweaked a bit over last year's ad with some copy but will include some really nice photographs to give it some stopping power as people are flipping through the book
- Paul asked if it was something everyone will have a chance to look over
- Jay mentioned that it was due before the next meeting but said he could email it out to everyone beforehand
- Jay stated that we are still working on updating the brochure
- Jay expects the brochure to go to the printer within the next couple of weeks
- We plan to print 100,000 copies which should last us a year

Website Review - July

- Jay mentioned that at the last meeting Jesse Lambert suggested putting our stakeholder/attractions brochures available on our website for download and asked Wynne to explain what info she found out in doing this
- Wynne explained that the easiest solution for the consumers and for programming wise is going to place it in the same section where they can order our visitor guide but have an additional section that says 'click here for additional brochures from the area' so that they will be able to check off which brochures they want
- They will have the option to mail or download the brochure
- Once they select it, an email will go out to each of the contacts that it is designated to
- The email will tell you if they downloaded it or if they would like it by mail
- Wynne requested a nice PDF of everyone's brochure so it can be available for download
- Wynne reviewed July's website report
- Site visits were 3,807
- Page views were 17,175
- Unique visitors were 3,421
- Search engine impressions were 417,906

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- Click thru rate was .48%
- Top page viewed was 'Activites-Swamp/Eco-Tours'
- Top referring site was MyWebSearch.com
- Brochure requests were 119 (36 downloads, savings of \$47.52)
- Top visitation city was New Orleans then Houston and Baton Rouge
- Wynne reported that the texting campaign that we were offered with the NOCVB is doing really well
- Texts are up to more than 1400 for our keywords with 'Deals' as the clear front-runner
- Paul asked if we should be doing the 'Groupons' and asked Wynne if she would look into it
- Wynne mentioned that we are looking to add more QR codes this year including using them with promotions
- MS Tags report showed 223 click thru for *Travel Deals*, 48 click thru for *Home* page and 21 click thru for *Seasonal Page*
- Wynne explained those number are to date and not monthly
- Jay asked Wynne if we can start looking at it on a monthly basis
- Facebook had a lot of activity in June so we're down a bit in July but regrouping on how to bring the schedule together

Community Center Report – Coy St. Pierre

- For the second half of July there were 4 soundstage inquires, 0 inquires for private events, 2 location requests and 2 ad placements which included a full page ad in the La Production Index 2012 and update of the film and location listing with La Film and Video Sourcebook
- For the first half of August there were 1 soundstage inquiry, 0 inquires for private events, three location requests in the area and 1 ad placement in the La Entertainment Sourcebook

Show Update – Kimmie Carlos

- **Military Travel Show** – Kimmie went with a group of about 23 from area hotels and attractions to visit three military bases: Eglin AFB, Carlsberg and NAS Pensacola
- Kimmie stated that they had a really great response from the group wanting to come visit our area
- **July 11 -14:** Florida Motorcoach Association – Hollywood, FL
- Kimmie met with a tour operator that is coming at the end of August to do a FAM tour and is bringing a group in December
- Kimmie found the show was much better than when she went in 2009 because people were ready to come back right away
- **July 20 -22:** DMAI Annual Convention – New Orleans, LA

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- **July 24-29:** STS Marketing College – Dahlonega, GA
- Jay attended DMAI and STS Marketing College and felt both were very valuable in seeing what products were offered for Convention and Visitors Bureaus and educational classes
- Jay felt what he got out of both those seminars was to make a big push social marketing wise
- Jay feels that's where we really need to be and focus on
- In speaking to some other counterparts at some other CVBs, Jay was surprised how much money they were spending online versus conventional print media
- A couple of them are spending 50% – 60 % of their budget towards online efforts
- Jay wants to develop a plan in the next few months in order to grow our Facebook and Twitter numbers
- Jay mentioned that he purchased a social media plan from Miles Media at a silent auction while attending STS
- The plan was a \$4,500 value he purchased for \$500
- Jay plans to get with Miles Media for help in developing our plan

Upcoming Schedule for RPTC

- **August 18-24:** Student Youth Travel Association (SYTA) – New York, NY
- Kimmie has about 40 appointments for this show
- **August 31:** Keesler Air Force Base Travel Show – Biloxi, MS
- Will do a one day travel show at Keesler since they could fit them in on the last military show
- **September 11-14:** Virginia Motorcoach Association – Chesapeake, VA
- Kimmie feels this show is well worth attending since you get that one on one interaction with a tour operator

BP Grant Update

- Jay reported that he has been working with St. John Parish in developing their new tourism brochure as part of the grant
- Jay mentioned that we did receive the funds from the State for St. John and St. James Parishes
- St. Charles Parish's funds were going directly to them which they also received according to Corey Fauchaux
- Jay stated that for the projects we are collaborating on with St. Charles, we will send them a bill and they will pay us

V. Chairman's Monthly Report- Paul Aucoin

General Comments

- Paul noted that in everyone's packets are copies of thank you letters from Lt. Governor Jay Dardenne from his visit to the area
- Paul thanked everyone who participated in the visit
- Paul thought it was very successful in showing the Lt. Governor what we do and how we can work in whatever the state does
- Paul reminded everyone that South Central Planning offers a Revolving Loan Fund which loans money at low interest rates to businesses in the three parishes
- Paul encouraged anyone that is interested or have any questions about the loan, to call South Central Planning

A motion was made by Judy Songy and seconded by Nicole Veillon to adjourn the meeting. The motion was unanimously approved.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.