

River Parishes Tourist Commission
Meeting Minutes
February 8, 2011

Meeting Attendance

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

Absent: Nancy Robert, Peter Jasper

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

Stakeholders/Guests: Tom Binon (Hampton Inn), Rachael Burns (Holiday Inn Express), Sherry Constance (LTPA), Jane Heltz (Quality Inn), Jesse Lambert (Houmas House), Cathy Matherne (Airboat Tours by Arthur), Zeb and Debra Mayhew (Oak Alley Plantation), Audrey Temple (St. James Welcome Center), Wynne Waltman (Graham Group), Jane Boddie (Evergreen Plantation)

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 January Minutes

- Paul asked for a motion to approve the January minutes

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

III. Monthly Financial Reports

- Current assets as of January 31 are \$142,000 compared to December's \$148,000 which is a \$6,000 difference
- Budgeted income was \$27,715 and actual was \$19,583 which is an \$8,131 difference
- Paul noted this difference was due to receiving St. Charles Parish's check early therefore it was in last month's financials
- Actual income for the year was \$299,540 and budgeted was \$294,000 therefore we're \$5,000 ahead on the income
- Paul reviewed some of line items under *Program Services* such as advertising, website and printing and production that stood out to him
- Jay explained that some of the bills didn't come in as expected therefore some of the figures are off but he has a new budget showing the adjustments
- For Salaries and Benefits, Paul noted the numbers are off due to the timing that we received the invoice from the St. James Parish
- Total *General & Administrative* expenses are \$3,741 above budget for the month and \$5,664 above budget for the year
- Total Expenses were \$64,356 variance for the month and \$78,657 variance for the year
- Paul explained that out of the \$78,657 there is the \$45,000 salary invoice that will be coming out of that
- Jay added that we have three big items that will be coming out of that figure which includes the salary invoice, the new brochure and the state tour guide ad

A motion was made by Betty Haydel and seconded by Nicole Veillon to approve the January 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

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

- Paul reviewed the General Ledger and Bank Statement
- Total book balance for period ending 1/31/11 was \$142,473.26 with \$11,561 in outstanding checks
- Ending bank balance was \$154,000
- Paul reviewed the invoices paid for the month
- Paul asked for a motion to approve the January invoices paid

A motion was made by Nicole Veillon and seconded by Dolores Florent to approve the invoices paid for January. The motion was unanimously approved.

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- Paul reminded the board that he asked everyone to take home the audit report last month in order to review it prior to asking for approval
- Paul asked for a motion to approve the audit report from our annual auditor

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

- Paul noted that the next item on the agenda is the amended budget however he suggested waiting until after Executive Session since some of it is related to the topic being discussed in Executive Session
- Paul asked for a motion to defer amending the budget until after Executive Session

A motion was made by Nicole Veillon and seconded by Betty Haydel to differ amending the budget until after executive session. The motion was unanimously approved.

A motion was made by Nicole Veillon and seconded by Dolores Florent 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 welcomed everyone to the February meeting and wished everyone a Happy Valentine's Day, a Happy Mardi Gras and Happy President's Day
- Paul announced that at the LTPA meeting this year, Destrehan Plantation won the 'Attraction of the Year' award and Zeb Mayhew with Oak Alley Plantation was presented with the 'Lifetime Achievement' award
- Paul congratulated the winners

IV. Director's Report- Jay Tusa

Advertising & PR Update

- Wynne Waltman with Graham Group showed the new brochure and noted that it is receiving lots of compliments
- Wynne mentioned a lot of work is currently being done in public relations, updating the press kit, getting some editorial calendars, and working on the social media
- Will have an eNewsletter that we're looking to launch next week to include the Louey awards that Paul spoke about earlier and Mardi Gras info
- Working on a pocket folder that will work with our press kit
- Jay mentioned that we are working on updating our facebook page by changing the look of it and adding more content such as events
- Wynne added that fans will see a more attractive page instead of seeing everyone's comments

Website

- Jay reviewed the ongoing website stats
- Numbers were up a little this month from last month
- Total brand impressions were 406,544 from 312,129
- Direct visits to the site was 363
- Total visits were up from 2,500 to 3,400
- Unique visitors were up as well from 2,300 to 3,000
- Total page views were up from 19,681 to 27,811
- Website brochure requests were up from 33 last month to 89 this month

BP Grant

- Jay mentioned that the state recently sent out the guidelines for the grant which is included in the meeting packets
- Funds will still be distributed directly to the parishes
- Jay noted we will be working with the parishes on some projects
- St. James Parish has committed their dollars to us to use in order to promote tourism to the area
- Jay attended a meeting with the stakeholders in St. Charles Parish and there are a couple of projects that they are interested in working with us on, one being a promotional video and the other would be some type of wayfinding signage
- St. John Parish is still discussing what they would like to do with their funds and have not heard back from them at this time
- Paul mentioned that since St. James has asked the Commission to handle their budget he thought it would be unfair to take their entire money and devote it to the three parishes when the other parishes are holding back therefore he suggested using their funds as a matching fund whereas if St. Charles gives \$10,000 then we would take that amount from St. James and put it towards a joint

project and what is left over St. James will use to promote their area like the other parishes will be doing to promote their areas

- St. James will be receiving \$24,770.53, St. Charles \$59,744.06 and St. John \$54,738.99

Show Update

- **ABA (American Bus Association):** Jan 8-13 – Philadelphia, PA
- Kimmie met with different tour operators this year
- She had 32 appointments and sent out the leads
- Most people are coming to the area at the end of 2011 and planning for 2012
- The biggest request from the tour operators are pictures and a calendar of events for the area.
- Kimmie will be working with Wynne and Jay to put together a disc of about 50 images of the area to hand out
- There is a very strong interest in coming back to the New Orleans area.
- Kimmie booked a tour while there for Oak Alley with lunch for March 31st.
- **LTPA Travel & Tourism Summit:** Jan 25-27 – Baton Rouge, LA
- Kimmie met with our international reps and was told that we need our brochure in different languages especially French and German.
- They also suggested that we have a welcome page on our website in those languages
- Will be working on some media flash drives to give them as well
- Jay thought the seminars were very good at the Summit this year and heard it was the most attended
- Jay's only concern was at that time wasn't given for award recipients to speak
- Paul suggested at the next meeting to consider adopting a resolution asking LTPA to reconsider not allowing people to say a few words after receiving an award
- It was mentioned that LTPA did send out a survey asking for feedback
- **Tennessee Motor Coach Association:** Jan 31-Feb 3 – Tunica, MS
- Kimmie met with 15 different tour operators
- Most are coming to New Orleans currently using a receptive operator
- Many trips planned for fall of 2011 and 2012
- Jay added that the video we currently have is pretty but it doesn't tell the whole story of the area
- It doesn't have information about restaurants and swamp tours and things such as that
- Jay would like to have something that shows a broader picture that we can also use on YouTube, marketing on the web and also something Kimmie can use as a sales tool in order to showcase everything our area has to offer

- Jay mentioned we have in our budget money to translate our entire site in various languages using some tools from Google and it is something that we are working on

Upcoming Schedule for RPTC

- **February 10-12: DC Mardi Gras** – Washington, D.C.
- **February 13-17: Military Base shows** – Florida Panhandle
- Kimmie will be going to 4 military bases from Biloxi to Destin
- Kimmie will be handing out brochures and our chips
- **February 21: President's Day Holiday** – Office Closed
- **February 21-25: TravelSouth** – Atlanta, GA
- This is a premier appointment show just for the southern states of Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia
- **March 7-8: Mardi Gras Holiday** – Office Closed
- Jay reminded everyone that our originally scheduled meeting next month for March 8 has been rescheduled for the following week on March 15 due to Mardi Gras

V. Chairman's Monthly Report- Paul Aucoin

Board Meeting Schedule

- Last meeting there was discussion about not meeting monthly
- Paul asked if the board or attractions had any thoughts on the subject
- Jay reminded everyone that at the last meeting it was suggested instead of having a meeting monthly to instead perhaps have it every other month
- Jay noted that our bylaws state we need to have a meeting once a quarter therefore we were throwing around the idea of keeping it once a month or possibly going to every other month
- After a brief discussion it was unanimous that the meetings should be held every month

General Comments

- Jay mentioned that Nancy Robert offered to host our next meeting at Destrehan Plantation in honor of her winning LTPA's Louey Award along with all she has going on with the 1811 Slave Revolt Exhibit
- Judy Songy mentioned a farmer's market on the Westbank in St. John Parish is hoping to be open by the Spring

- Paul announced that Nucor was recently awarded their permits and they are going to start construction soon therefore he would like Audrey Temple, Jay, himself, Judy and Mac Bordelon to meet with our hotel committee and find ways to make sure we let them know what's available for the contractors that will be working there

VI. Executive Session

- Paul announced that the board will go into a short executive session where no votes will be taken

A motion was made by Nicole Veillon and seconded by Judy Songy to enter into Executive Session. The motion was unanimously approved.

A motion was made by Nancy Robert and seconded by Judy Songy to return to Regular Session. The motion was unanimously approved.

- Paul noted that while the commission was in executive session no votes were taken
- The Chair recognized a quorum and asked if there was any business to be taken up

*A motion was made by Judy Songy and seconded by Nicole Veillon that for **this** year the commission pay 100% of the health and dental insurance premiums for the two employees, Jay Tusa and Kimmie Carlos, that elected coverage based on the prior offer of 85% for employees and 75% for dependents. It will also pay for 100% of the vision insurance premiums for all three employees, Jay Tusa, Kimmie Carlos and Coy St. Pierre. The premium coverage will be revisited next year based on how the premium rates might change. The motion was unanimously approved.*

- Paul asked if there was any other business to come before the commission
- Jay mentioned that he needed approval for the amended budget however he will now have to revise the budget since the numbers will be skewed from the action that was just taken.
- Jay ask that it be voted on next month

A motion was made by Nicole Veillon and seconded by Betty Haydel to differ reviewing the amended budget until the next meeting. The motion was unanimously approved.

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.