

River Parishes Tourist Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
January 19, 2010

Meeting Attendance

Present: Paul Aucoin, Betty Haydel, Peter Jasper, Mike Norton,  
Nancy Robert, Judy Songy

Absent: Delores Florent, Nicole Veillon

Staff: Coy St. Pierre, Jay Tusa

Stakeholders/Guests: Laura Anthony, (Comcast), Rachael Burns (Holiday Inn Express), Kim Fontenot (San Francisco Plantation), Al Hebron (Flagship Limousine), Jesse Lambert (Houmas House), Cathy Matherne (Airboat Tours by Arthur), Debra & Zeb Mayhew, Jr. (Oak Alley Plantation), Debbie Reulet (St. Joseph Plantation), Catherine Schons (Pleasure Bend Nature Tours)

I. Call to order

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

II. Approval of December Minutes

- Paul asked for a motion to approve the December minutes

*A motion was made by Judy Songy and seconded by Betty Haydel to approve the December minutes. The motion was unanimously approved.*

III. Monthly Financial Reports

- Current cash in the bank is \$684,194

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- For the month of December \$28,555 was budgeted in income and actual received was \$30,000
- However for the 6 months period ending, we budgeted \$326,749 and actual received was \$282,152 which is \$44,000 less than what was budgeted due to the decreased amount received from the state
- Paul mentioned that Jay contacted the state and found out that we are going to receive the money that was budgeted
- Jay mentioned that they now pay quarterly and should be receiving the second quarter soon
- Jay mentioned that he will reflect the budget to show the payments being made in quarterly installments
- Jay was told the amount would be \$28,000 for the next quarterly installment
- Paul mentioned that he and Jay will try to communicate with the state to see how this rebate works to get a better handle on it for next year's budget
- For *Total Program Services* for the 1 month ended, we budget \$34,723 and spent \$21,031. For 6 months ended, we budgeted \$182,695 and spent \$139,746
- For *Total Salaries & Benefits* we didn't have any for this month because they come in quarterly. For the year to date, it's balanced
- For *Total General & Administrative Expenses* for 1 month we had budgeted \$6,059 and spent \$1,793. For 6 months ended we budgeted \$25,222 and spent \$24,547
- For *Total Expenses* we budgeted for 1 month ended \$40,783 and spent \$22,824 and for 6 months ended we budgeted \$281,568 and spent \$237,944

*A motion was made by Judy Songy and seconded by Betty Haydel to approve the December financials. The motion was unanimously approved.*

- Paul reviewed the charts
- Paul reminded everyone how close the charts reflect the budget with St. Charles' October income at \$7,026 and we budgeted \$7,000; St. John's income was \$15,673 and we budgeted \$13,500; St. James' income was \$2,227 and \$2,000 was budgeted
- The single chart for the three parishes shows income for October at \$24,925 and our budget is \$22,500

*A motion was made by Nancy Robert and seconded by Betty Haydel to approve the hotel occupancy tax for December. The motion was unanimously approved.*

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- Paul reviewed the General Ledger which is a list of all expenses current and year to date for each category

*A motion was made by Nancy Robert and seconded by Betty Haydel to approve the invoices paid for December. The motion was unanimously approved.*

- Paul reviewed the bank statement, invoices paid and transaction listing

*A motion was made by Nancy Robert and seconded by Betty Haydel to approve the bank statement for December. The motion was unanimously approved.*

*A motion was made by Mike Norton and seconded by Judy Songy to go into recess. The motion was unanimously approved.*

Break 1:20 - 1:30

*A motion was made by Mike Norton and seconded by Judy Songy to reconvene. The motion was unanimously approved.*

The meeting was called back to order and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Opening Comments

- Paul welcomed everyone to our January meeting and wished everyone a Happy New Year and Happy Mardi Gras
- Paul asked the board to take home the audit report to review and as customary it will be on the agenda for next meeting to be approved
- Paul had a chance to review it, it looked good with no comments
- Jay showed everyone an award that the River Road Plantations received from Encore Magazine. The award ranks the plantations as a “Top 50 Attractions” for the State of Louisiana

IV. Director’s Report- Jay Tusa

Website

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- Website is almost done, will be launched January 21
- There was a delay because someone from Jennifer's team, Olivia, was hospitalized
- Jay mentioned that he will try to get a link to email everyone so they can look over it beforehand
- Jay stated he thought it was a beautiful site and is really pleased with it
- Jay mentioned wanting to have Jennifer Barbee do our social marketing for us
- Kimmie mentioned to Jay that she is interested in taking on the social marketing as part of her job
- Jay is proposing that Jennifer start us off with the social marketing efforts on an agreement for three months and thereafter consult for us on a monthly basis that will be in our other marketing agreement that we've already signed with them. They will just add the consulting of \$2,000 a month into that
- Jay asked for approval for the social marketing to get us started by showing Kimmie the ropes, establishing us out there, get us where we need to be and then turn it over to Kimmie
- This would be for 3 months at \$2,000 a month to handle all the social media marketing
- Mike Norton asked to be sent information on what she's doing for other people as far as what's she's offering
- Paul asked the stakeholders if they felt paying \$2,000 a month forever is worth what we'd get out of it
- Jay didn't think we would be paying this amount after the 3 months since Kimmie would take over after that time frame
- Jay mentioned that Jennifer Barbee handles the social media for Panama City Beach and in one year they got 43,000 followers
- Jay feels there is definitely a value to hiring someone that has the expertise to not necessarily do it continuously but at least get us started in the right direction
- Paul stated he is a bit reluctant with Jennifer because of the length of time she's taken on the website but asked those stakeholders that have followers on their sites if they've gotten any benefits back from them
- Rachael Burns with Holiday Inn Express explained that it all ties into the search engines such as Google and the position you will come up on them when key words are searched
- Debra Mayhew had some concern with Jennifer doing it because we would still have to provide her with the information as to what is going on and if we have to do that we might as well do it ourselves
- Mike Norton felt the amount was excessive
- Some of the stakeholders felt JB wouldn't have the amount of time that was proposed to devote to our site with all their other clients

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- After a lengthy discussion, Jay suggested waiting until next meeting to make a decision and he will get more info such as what JB's doing for other people, the results she produced for other clients, and we can get her on the phone for the next meeting to field all the questions and concerns everyone has
- Paul and Mike also asked for other proposals for the social marketing to compare JB's price

### Visitor Guide

- Jay handed out a few comps on the new visitor's guide
- Ready to go to the printer probably at the end of the week
- In the process of wrapping up a few photos
- Had some delays with the weather in taking some of the pictures
- We're working on redoing the map to have all attractions assigned numbers instead of the combination of numbers and letters like we had on the old brochure which was confusing
- Mike asked for a copy of the map before sending it to the printer
- Will be printing 60,000 which should be good for a year

### PR & Advertising

- Jay sent out the RFP's from the list of names he received through the local PRSA (Public Relations Society of America) Chapter
- Should be hearing back from them in a couple of weeks
- Everyone he sent it to said they would get the info to him
- Jay asked if anyone was interested in helping with the selection process along with the PR Committee that was formed a while back
- Jesse, Kim and Nancy agreed to help with the selection
- Jay mentioned that once he starts receiving them, he will forward them on for review and possibly have a meeting to discuss and make some recommendations for the board for the next meeting

### Sales

- Kimmie is currently at ABA

RPTC Hotel FAM

- Kimmie sent out some emails about doing another Hotel FAM and only received responses from Rachael (Holiday Inn Express) and Sheilah (Quality Inn)
- There just wasn't enough interest to do another FAM at this time
- Someone suggested us going to the hotels and giving a brief educational tour such as showing our DVD
- Jay thought that might be a good idea and asked Rachael if she would be interested in giving 20 minutes of her time for this
- Rachael expressed her interested in brief monthly trainings
- Jay mentioned that we can talk more about bringing us to them if the hotels are willing to give the time

TK Ranch FAM

- Had a small FAM come through for a prospective group of about 30 that's coming in the Fall
- They toured San Francisco and Laura Plantation and ate at B&C Seafood
- They are undecided on which two plantations the group will be visiting but will be staying at the Holiday Inn Express in LaPlace

Upcoming Schedule for RPTC:

- January 15-19: American Bus Association (ABA)- Washington, D.C.
- January 22-24: DC Mardi Gras – Washington, D.C.: will be going as part of Gumbo Group this year
- Paul, Jay and Judy will be attending the DC Mardi Gras along with other locals
- January 26-28: LTPA Travel & Tourism Summit – Monroe, LA: Jay, Kimmie and Rachael will be attending
- February 8-10: Tennessee Motor Coach- Chattanooga, TN- this is a new show for us
- February 15-16: Mardi Gras Holiday- Office Closed
- Our next board meeting falls on Mardi Gras Day so it will need to be rescheduled
- It was decided to push it back one week to the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February at the same time

Closing Comments

- Kim Fontenot with San Francisco Plantation reminded everyone that her Frisco Fest is coming up March 6-7
- Nancy Robert with Destrehan Plantation announced that they opened their Herbert J Harvey Legacy Room which contains some state of the art museum cases that are housing 20 documents on a long temp term loan from the Historic New Orleans Collection
- Jay mentioned that Kimmie got us two interns from UNO that will be starting tomorrow to help us out
- Jay also mentioned that we will be sending them by each of the plantations in the next couple of weeks so they can look around but will notify everyone before hand

V. 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 Judy Songy and seconded by Judy Songy to enter into Executive Session. The motion was unanimously approved.*

*A motion was made by Mike Norton and seconded by Betty Haydel to return to Regular Session. The motion was unanimously approved.*

- Paul noted that no votes were taken and recognized a quorum

*A motion was made by Judy Songy and seconded by Mike Norton to raise Coy St. Pierre's salary from \$XX,XXX to \$XX,XXX effective next paycheck. The motion was unanimously approved.*

*A motion was made by Mike Norton and seconded by Nancy Robert to adjourn the meeting. The motion was unanimously approved.*

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.