

River Parishes Tourist Commission
Meeting Minutes
July 13, 2011

Meeting Attendance

Present: Paul Aucoin, Betty Haydel, Judy Songy, Nicole Veillon
Absent: Peter Jasper, Dolores Florent
Staff: Coy St. Pierre, Jay Tusa
Stakeholders/Guests: Jesse Lambert (Houmas House), Wynne Waltman (Graham Group)

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 June Minutes

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

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

III. Monthly Financial Reports

- Assets at the end of June are \$677,404 which is about a \$29,000 increase from last month
- Total Liabilities and Net Assets are the same with a \$29,000 increase from last month
- Income for the month was about \$40,000 and budgeted was \$28,000

- For the year, income was \$532,562 and budgeted was \$504,000 therefore revenue showed a \$28,000 increase for the year
- For *Expenses Program Services* for June, actual was about \$7,000 and budgeted was \$2,000
- Jay explained the reason for that was due to expenses that was suppose to come in last month didn't so we were actually less the month before and over this month
- For *Expenses Program Services* for the year, we spent \$256,000 and budgeted \$258,000 therefore we're a little under budget for the year
- For *Salaries and Benefits* for the month, actual was \$1,271 and budgeted was \$2,244
- For *Salaries and Benefits* for the year, actual was \$190,520 and budgeted was \$196,000 therefore we're about \$5,400 above budget for the year
- Total *General & Administrative* for the month, actual was \$2,019 and budgeted was \$2,800 therefore we're about \$800 under budget and for the year we're \$1,190 under budget

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

- Paul reviewed the General Ledger and Bank Statement
- Ending balance per bank was \$170,971.47 with the ending balance per book the same with zero outstanding checks

A motion was made by Judy Songy and seconded by Nicole Veillon to approve the bank statement for June. The motion was unanimously approved.

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

A motion was made by Judy Songy and seconded by Betty Haydel to approve the invoices paid for June. The motion was unanimously approved.

- Paul noted that a review of the entire budget was done last month and the board was given the opportunity to take it home with them to review
- Jay added that adjustments were made in the budget based on the executive session in regards to the salary adjustments that were approved
- Paul highlighted that the 2011/2012 budget shows a proposed income of \$468,532 which is a very conservative projection
- *Salary and Benefits* at \$191,000
- *General & Administrative* to be \$40,000
- *Program Services*, \$233,311
- *Total Expenses* of \$465,382
- Jay stated he put some money aside in *Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment*; about \$1,000 and asked the board for approval in purchasing a new computer/laptop for himself since his has been giving him problems for the past 6 months
- Paul mentioned that he thought we need to start inventorying and tracking all of our movable assets
- Jay noted that our auditor has a list of all our inventory which they track each year
- Paul stated he thinks we should physically tag all of our assets so that it corresponds to their list
- Paul also asked what we do with our old assets and what are the rules on disposing them
- Paul asked that we contact our auditors to find out
- Jay stated that depending on the condition, we either donate them or throw them away
- Paul asked that we get official rules on disposing and tagging our inventory

A motion was made by Judy Songy and seconded by Nicole Veillon to approve the purchase of a new computer for Jay Tusa. The motion was unanimously approved.

- Paul asked for a motion to approve next year's budget

A motion was made by Betty Haydel and seconded by Judy Songy to approve the 2011/2012 Budget. The motion was unanimously approved.

- Jay reviewed last year's budget
- Revenue for the year ended up at \$532,000 with the last revised budget projecting \$504,000
- For expenses: for *Salaries* we were about \$4,000 under budget and for *General & Administrative* we budgeted \$44,000 and ended up \$40,700 and for *Program Services* we budgeted \$259,000 and ended with \$258,000
- Total for the year we finished with about \$45,000 in savings

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- Paul suggested at the next meeting to consider moving some of those funds into the CD account
- Jay stated he would look into whether we can add to the CD or do something separate
- Paul asked Jay to check to see what is the lowest our account has been over the last two years so that we don't go below that figure

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

Break 10:20 - 10:30

A motion was made by Judy Songy and seconded by Betty Haydel 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 congratulated Jay Tusa for his recent election to LTPA's Board of Directors
- Paul also mentioned that Norman Marmillion with Laura Plantation was elected as secretary to LTPA's executive board

IV. Director's Report- Jay Tusa

Lt. Governor Dardenne's visit

- Jay reported that Lt. Governor Dardenne toured the River Parishes about a week and a half ago
- Jay felt it was very successful and thought the Lt. Governor enjoyed himself
- The Lt. Governor got to meet some of the stakeholders and had lunch at Ormond Plantation with our Parish Presidents

Advertising & PR Update

- Wynne discussed meeting with several of the attractions a few weeks ago about doing some tweaks to the campaign for our advertising

- The group came up with a couple of different solutions, one being a renovation on the current ad campaign such as more jewel tones, different color schemes and bigger photography
- Will have new headline options with a theme line that may or may not be a tag line: *'Historically significant. Exceptionally elegant. Wildly different.'*
- Different headlines that can be switched out will be: *'We've got a story to tell. When you leave so will you.'*
- *This History class serves mint juleps.*
- *The river shaped the culture, the experience will shape you.*
- *History doesn't live on cable, it lives here.*
- Another campaign theme/concept is *'There is an I in History'*
- This concept will be the different things you can do on a personal level
- Headlines to be used: *'I found a spark'* with image: couple at a beautiful dinner at Latil's, shot over the husbands shoulder into wife's eyes/ alternate tight shot in one of the gardens
- *I found a connection.* – image: African American woman holding one of the framed photos in the cabins at Laura
- *I found an adrenaline rush.* – image: swamp tour close up, expression on young couple, water spraying
- Sample body copy which may need to be shortened: *'There is so much to find in New Orleans Plantation Country. Countless stories live within the walls and halls of our nine plantations which have held watch over the Mississippi for over a century. Culinary experiences that are second to none and as varied as your imagination. This is hands-on history from blacksmithing to open hearth cooking, you'll see craftsmen demonstrating skills that have been passed on for generations. It is easy to get here and modern accommodations with full amenities make it easier to stay here. Plan your trip today and find yourself here.'*
- Wynne noted having this written out in script will personalize it a bit
- Will look to get additional feedback for those campaigns before using them
- Jay has been talking to different stakeholders on their views
- Jay mentioned that we will get feedback from everyone, make some changes and come back with the final report

Website Review - June

- Search engine referrals for June was 67.06%
- Total brand impressions for June was 248,640
- Direct visits to the site for June was 376
- Total visits for June was 3,014
- Unique visitors for June was 2,613
- Total pageviews for June was 14,466
- PPC impressions for June was 233,232

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- PPC CTR was 0.57%
- Website brochure request for June was 62
- Brochures can now be downloaded from the website showing a printing and postage savings for June of \$39.60
- Jesse Lambert with Houmas House asked if their brochures were able to be downloaded from the website as well
- Jay mentioned they weren't currently but he thought it was a good idea and would look into the cost of it
- Jay suggested putting that option on a couple of different pages throughout the website
- Jesse mentioned that Houmas House does that through TourLouisiana.com which helps generate email and physical address for them each week
- Wynne reviewed ad group performances
- *Swamp/Eco Tours* had 574 clicks, 102,235 impressions, .56% CTR, \$419.40 spent
- *Weddings* had 406 clicks, 92,820 impressions, .44% CTR, \$371.64 spent
- *Plantations* had 339 clicks, 38,177 impressions, .89% CRT, \$233.79 spent
- Plantations had a high click through rate with people looking specifically for Louisiana Plantations and a variety of those keywords
- Paul asked if our ads are posted on our website since we are paying for them and if they are good ads, he feels they should be posted online as well
- Wynne stated that they absolutely could be put on our site once they run
- Top visitation city – New Orleans, Houston, Baton Rouge
- Facebook Impressions – 10,421
- Top traffic sources were Google with 1279 visits and direct with 332 visits
- Top referring keywords were New Orleans plantations and New Orleans plantation country
- Top pages viewed were *Activities/Swamp Tours* with 771 views and *Weddings-Wedding Venues* with 664 views
- Top Geographic Areas were New Orleans with 256 visits and Houston with 122 visits
- Paul suggested that Jay email the attractions the breakdown of the *Top Pages Viewed* section so they can see how our site is working for them

Upcoming Schedule for RPTC

- **July 11 -14:** Florida Motorcoach Association – Hollywood, FL
- **July 20 -22:** DMAI Annual Convention – New Orleans, LA
- **July 24-29:** STS Marketing College – Dahlonge, GA

General Comments

- Jay stated that he feels we need to address the current phone situation at the office
- Jay mentioned that we have been having problems for about a year now
- We have talked to the parish in different ways, Paul has spoken with Natalie as well and we're still having problems
- Jay feels it's a serious issue as we are not getting our voice messages or receiving them up to two weeks later
- Calls are getting directed to the courthouse or some other department or the phone just rings without it being picked up by a voice mail
- Paul mentioned that he thought the problem was fixed
- Paul asked if it was ok with the board for Jay to get a couple of estimates from some other phone companies with all the features we need and he will reinitiate talks with Natalie
- Paul stated that the administration is very sensitive about the person that's suppose to take care of this which in this case is Dana Milioto
- Paul asked for a detailed list to be sent to him of the problems with the phone system so that he can give it to Dana and ask when they can fix it
- Paul noted that it isn't on the agenda this month however every month there will be a report from Coy on the St. John Center with tracking the activity it receives
- Jay explained this was part of the agreement with the parish that a report would be generated on what we're doing for the center
- Jay stated Coy will be doing a monthly report for the Tourist Commission and it will be forwarded to the parish on a quarterly basis

V. Chairman's Monthly Report- Paul Aucoin

Board Authorization – Co-operative Endeavor Agreement

- Paul mentioned that he and Jay met with Natalie, Angelic and Theresa
- They have agreed to engage in a Co-operative Endeavor Agreement with the Tourist Commission for a two year lease where we would continue to use the office space in the St. John Center
- The only change in the lease was the request in giving them a report of what we are doing with regards to marketing the building
- Paul asked if anyone had any questions on the report
- Paul asked for authorization for Jay to sign the co-operative endeavor agreement with the parish

A motion was made by Betty Haydel and seconded by Judy Songy to approve Jay Tusa to sign the Co-operative Endeavor Agreement with St. John Parish. The motion was unanimously approved.

Board Authorization – Audit Engagement Letter

- Paul asked for approval to sign the annual engagement letter with Martin and Pellegrin which he signs on an annual basis

A motion was made by Betty Haydel and seconded by Judy Songy to approve Paul Aucoin to sign the audit engagement letter with Martin and Pellegrin. The motion was unanimously approved.

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

- Chairman Paul Aucoin asked that roll be taken; recognized a quorum and called the meeting to order
- Paul asked that the records reflect that the commission was in an executive session where no votes were taken
- Paul asked if there was any motions to come before the board

A motion was made by Judy Songy and seconded by Nicole Veillon to authorize the Chairman to consult and get legal opinions when deemed necessary with the understanding to report back to the board. The motion was unanimously approved.

- Paul asked if there was any other business to come before the board before asking for a motion to adjourn

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

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.