

River Parishes Tourist Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
June 14, 2011

Meeting Attendance

Present: Paul Aucoin, Dolores Florent, Nicole Veillon

Absent: Peter Jasper, Judy Songy

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

Stakeholders/Guests: Paul Bair (Cajun Pride Swamp Tours), Buddy Boe, Tom Binion (Hampton Inn), Kim Fontenot (San Francisco Plantation), Jesse Lambert (Houmas House), Cathy Matherne (Airboat Tours by Arthur), 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 April Minutes

- Paul asked for a motion to approve the April minutes since we didn't have a May meeting

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

III. Monthly Financial Reports - April

- Assets and liabilities improved by \$2,500
- Income was down about \$5,000 from budget to actual

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- Expenses were down about the same
- *General & Administrative* were about \$2,000 less than budgeted
- For the year we're about \$19 over budget for *General & Administrative Services*

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

- Paul reviewed the General Ledger and Bank Statement
- Ending balance per bank was \$123,732.40 and ending balance per book was \$123,732.40 with zero outstanding checks
- Paul reviewed the copies of all checks written and the CD account balance
- Paul asked Jay if he contacted the bank in regards to the CD interest
- Jay stated that he did and Omni bumped the rate up a quarter percent
- Paul asked for a motion to approve the bank statement for April

*A motion was made by Nicole Veillon and seconded by Betty Haydel to approve the bank statement for April. The motion was unanimously approved.*

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

*A motion was made by Betty Haydel and seconded by Nicole Veillon to approve the invoices paid for April. The motion was unanimously approved.*

### Monthly Financial Reports - May

- Total assets increased in the amount of about \$17,000
- For income for the month ending May 31<sup>st</sup> we had about \$80,000; we budgeted about \$58,000 therefore it was about \$22,000 above budget for the month and about \$16,500 above budget for the year
- For *Expense Program Services* for the month was \$11,686 actual and \$12,645 budgeted
- For the year we're about \$6,500 less than budgeted
- For *Salaries & Benefits* for the month ending May 31<sup>st</sup> we had budgeted \$49,500 and we spent \$48,221

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- We're about \$1,300 under budget for the month and about \$4,500 under budget for the year
- For *General & Administrative Services*, we budgeted \$3,565 and spent \$3,192 therefore we're \$375 under budget for the month and \$350 under budget for the year

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

- Paul reviewed the charts for the three parishes showing the monthly income
- The chart shows both St. Charles and St. John Parishes income shot up for the month of March
- St. James Parish continues to hold steady
- 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 Dolores Florent to approve the hotel occupancy tax for May. The motion was unanimously approved.*

- Paul reviewed the General Ledger and Bank Statement
- Ending balance per bank was \$202,661.22 and ending balance per book was \$140,830.51 with \$61,830.71 in outstanding checks
- Jay noted that one of the outstanding checks in the amount of \$46,886 was our quarterly payment to St. James Parish for our payroll
- Paul asked for a motion to approve the bank statement for May

*A motion was made by Nicole Veillon and seconded by Betty Haydel to approve the bank statement for May. The motion was unanimously approved.*

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

*A motion was made by Nicole Veillon and seconded by Betty Haydel to approve the invoices paid for May. The motion was unanimously approved.*

- Paul suggested reviewing the 2011/2012 budget but reserve the voting during the regular portion of the meeting
- Jay reminded Paul that they wouldn't be able to be vote on the budget until after the Executive Session when employee compensation would be discussed
- Jay suggested reviewing the budget with the exception of the salary portion
- For income Jay went through the history from the past year, averaged it out and was a little conservative with the numbers
- Projection for this budget will be a total income of \$468,532

- Paul noted that last year's budget had a total income of about \$504,000
- Jay explained the reason for cutting it back this year was because we received an extra payment from the state for our tax rebate due to some of our occupancy taxes being credited to a wrong account
- The mistake was caught and we received the funds but don't anticipate having that again
- Jay explained that the sales tax rebate is spread out over the four quarters at \$32,500
- This year we had \$40,000, \$54,000, \$30,000, \$30,000 in sales tax rebate income
- Jay explained what he did to make up for that short fall was since we had a large budget in Printing and Production he scaled that back a little
- We will try to do more advertising online instead of printing which will save some money
- Graham Group was also able to get a good rate on the printing of our new brochure which will save us money
- Jay reviewed the *General & Administrative* portion of the budget which was basic expenses
- Under *Program Services* we have advertising which is one of our largest line items which was increased from last year's budget from \$88,000 to \$92,000
- Jay mentioned that in addition to RPTC funds, we will also receive \$20,000 from the state for the CMP program, as well as, additional dollars from the BP grant
- Overall we're spending about \$130,000 in advertising this year
- Web Advertising dropped down a bit by changing from Jennifer Barbee over to Graham Group
- *Printing and Production* was the one item that took the biggest hit this year which we spent \$62,000 but next year we plan on spending \$37,000
- *Public Relations* has increased a little over this year due to starting the e-news letter on a quarterly basis
- *Training and Development* is used for the staff to attend different classes and training
- *Tradeshow Registration* is the same as last year
- Paul explained that since part of the budget required discussions concerning salaries, the board will wait until after executive session to approve the budget according to what is decided on the salaries

*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

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*A motion was made by Dolores Florent 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

### Advertising & PR Update

- Wynne Waltman with Graham Group announced that the website's upgrade was complete and encouraged everyone to check it out and make sure everyone's listings transferred over correctly
- Wynne showed a printed copy of the e-newsletter and asked if anyone wasn't receiving it they can submit their name to be put on this list
- Facebook numbers are looking good
- More people are signing up through facebook as well as through the website
- Jay reported that a meeting was held at Houmas House to discuss the marketing efforts which resulted in some good feedback
- Wynne mentioned that the brochure will also be updated so if anyone had any changes or updates to let them know

### Website Report – April & May

- Search engine referral for April was 82.47% and for May it was 80.42%
- Total brand impressions for April was 470,301 and for May it was 412,713
- Direct visits to the site for April was 340 and May was 449
- Total visits for April was 3,633 and May was 4,091
- Unique visitors for April was 3,222 and May was 3,557
- Total pageviews for April was 24,271 and May was 27,974
- PPC impressions for April was up at 458,153 but down a bit in May with 397,828
- Website brochure request for April was 39 and May we had 35

- Jay mentioned in regards to the website that since we launched the new site a week ago, he receives Google alerts for various keywords such as New Orleans Plantation Country and noticed he has received numerous emails with referrals to our new site. This means the search engines are finding the keywords and picking up our site
- Wynne mentioned that the new site is a lot more search engine friendly because a lot of the old site was done in Flash that search engines couldn't read

#### Scenic Byways Grant

- Jay asked for board approval for a Scenic Byways Grant that was just submitted to the State giving him authorization to sign the grant upon receiving it
- Jay read the resolution to the board that was included in the board packets

*A motion was made by Betty Haydel and seconded by Nicole Veillon to approve a board resolution for the Scenic Byways Grant. The motion was unanimously approved.*

#### 2011/2012 Marketing Plan

- Kimmie briefly outlined the sales portion of the marketing plan which includes hosting FAM tours targeting tour operators
- Adapt current database into a singular, web-based client/stakeholder database
- Partner with other local CVBs and the Louisiana Office of Tourism in FAM tours, sales calls and sales missions
- Participation in Leisure and Tour and Travel tradeshow
- Jay mentioned this year we added *World Travel Market* for the international market which we will be partnering with the state
- Jay noted that since there will be additional dollars this year through the BP grant we'll be able to do some extra advertising such as the *AAA TourBook*
- Jay explained that Plantation Parade has advertised in *AAA TourBook* in the past therefore we try not to duplicate efforts with them but because the buy that LTPA is getting and it's only available to CVBs, we're able to get a much better buy on that ad than Plantation Parade can therefore we're going to go in and Plantation Parade is going to come out starting in 2012
- Will continue to advertise in the *Travel and Vacation Show Recipe Book*
- As a participate in this program, we get access to all the shows that LTPA goes through
- Will bring back *Louisiana Life* with their special Louisiana travel editorial
- Will continue to do the airport signage

- Currently we are partnering with Plantation Parade with each having one sign
- *American Road Magazine* is something new that we are going to try as well as *Southern Living* and *Midwest Living*
- Jay feels *Southern Living* and *Midwest Living* will be good for lead generation
- Will continue to advertise in *Travel 50 & Beyond* which is always a good producer for us
- *Country Roads*, *L'Observateur Travel Guide* and *La Road Trips* are new publications
- Will continue with a presence in *Woodall's Campground Directory*
- Groups/Tour & Travel include; *Going on Faith*, *Group Tour Magazine*, *Group Travel Leader*, *Leisure Group Travel Itinerary Planning Guide*, *New Orleans Meeting Planners Guide*, *New Orleans Travel Planners Guide* and *Student Group Tour* and *SYTA Brochure* through LTPA
- Online advertising will include; Louisiana newspaper websites, *Tour Louisiana.com*; *Escape to the Southeast*, *Visit South*, *American Road Magazine.com*, Facebook advertising and *Southern Inspirations Go Guide*
- Jay mentioned that we received approval from the BP Grant to produce a series of videos
- Jay explained that we had a chance to apply for a grant through Scenic Byways which will be used to produce an extra video and way finding signage
- Jay is holding off on the BP Grant until he sees what we get from the Scenic Byways Grant so that it can help to produce a better video and also an additional video
- Jay mentioned that we should get notice of that grant in September
- In addition to having a tour operator FAM, we are looking into having a PR FAM
- This will be funded through the BP Grant as well
- Coy St. Pierre discussed recent film advertising efforts
- Coy reported that in the last year instead of attending film shows such as AFM and AFCI in Santa Monica we focused on print advertisements in publications such as *Scene Magazine*, *La Film & Video Magazine*, *Louisiana Entertainment Sourcebook*, which is distributed through the state and local film offices, and *Louisiana Production Index*
- Ads in the various publications were passed around
- Jay added that while the focus of the ads is to promote the soundstage, it's an added benefit that we can promote locations as well

*A motion was made by Betty Haydel and seconded by Nicole Veillon to approve the 2011/2012 Marketing Plan. The motion was unanimously approved.*

- Paul suggested to Jay that the Marketing Plan be put on the website for easier access
- Jay also reminded everyone that all of our past meeting minutes are currently online as well

Show Update

- **US Travel Association's International Pow Wow – San Francisco, CA**
- Kimmie reported that it was a lot better organized than it was last year
- Kimmie received about 130 leads however they came in individual emails
- Kimmie reported that it went well and people were interested in the plantations and the unique Louisiana culture

Upcoming Schedule for RPTC

- **July 4:** Independence Day Holiday – Office Closed
- **July 11 -14:** Florida Motorcoach Association – Hollywood, FL
- **July 11 -12:** LTPA Board Retreat
- Jay mentioned there is a conflict with our next board meeting and LTPA's Board Retreat which are both on July 12<sup>th</sup>
- Paul asked everyone to look at July 13<sup>th</sup> to see if that day is good for everyone
- Paul asked for a motion to change the board meeting from Tuesday, July 12<sup>th</sup> to Wednesday, July 13<sup>th</sup>

*A motion was made by Nicole Veillon and seconded by Betty Haydel that the next board meeting will take place on July 13<sup>th</sup> instead of July 12<sup>th</sup>. The motion was unanimously approved.*

V. Chairman's Monthly Report- Paul Aucoin

Replace Nancy Robert with Nicole Veillon for Omni Bank Account

- Paul asked for a motion to place Nicole Veillon as the authorized signer on the checking account since Nancy has resigned

*A motion was made by Dolores Florent and seconded by Betty Haydel to remove Nancy Robert as a signee on Omni Bank account and replace with Nicole Veillon. The motion was unanimously approved.*

River Region Legislative Luncheon

- Paul announced that on Thursday, June 16 will be River Region Day at the Legislature

- We will have a booth there along with each parish's Economic Development Board and Port of South Louisiana along with Ascension Parish Economic Development and Tourist Commission
- The main function will be lunch from 11:30 – 1:00 at the Lt. Governor's apartment in the Pentagon Barracks

#### Board Disclosure Forms

- Board disclosures were due on May 15<sup>th</sup>
- Paul noted that anyone failing to send those out could be in trouble with the legislative auditor

#### General Comments

- Paul announced that the Lt. Governor will be at Houmas House on June 24<sup>th</sup> for the LTPA meeting and then he has agreed to meet with us on June 30<sup>th</sup>
- The Lt. Governor will be touring the River Parishes
- Paul invited anyone wanting to join them can call Jay for the itinerary and join the group somewhere along the way
- The tour will start in St. James Parish and end at Destrehan Plantation in St. Charles Parish

#### 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 Delores Florent to enter into Executive Session. The motion was unanimously approved.*

*A motion was made by Nicole Veillon and seconded by Betty Haydel 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 to discuss personnel matter
- Paul asked if there was any motions to come before the board

*A motion was made by Dolores Florent and seconded by Nicole Veillon that each employee's salary be increased by 3% in a form of a raise. The motion was unanimously approved.*

- Jay Tusa asked Paul if he wanted to address the bonus issue with Coy St. Pierre
- Jay asked if the motion was to give Coy a 3% raise not taking into account those bonuses
- Paul stated that it was taking into account her salary only
- Coy mentioned that she was never given any bonuses but rather an increase in her salary of \$2,000 a year for the additional work she assumed in regards to the Community Center
- Paul stated that the recollection of the board was in anticipation in giving a bonus for the additional work the auditors said they couldn't give bonuses therefore the board went around that by their instruction to incorporate it in a form of a salary so that's why it was paid out monthly
- Paul mentioned that we can have discussions on the subject at a later time but he needed to finish the meeting since he had to leave early
- Paul mentioned that the board has agreed to reconsider these matters at any time but definitely by January if not sooner
- Paul wanted to make it clear that the board was well aware of other state employees and agencies not getting any raises at all
- Paul stated that the board was very mindful of the perception but thought that our employees do a good job and deserve to be compensated by a raise of at least 3%
- Paul also mentioned that they are also mindful that not only did some state employees not get raises but there were many people being laid off and vacancy is not being filled
- Paul noted that even in the private sector raises were not given so keeping that in mind the board was trying to be prudent caretakers of their funds so that was the decision of the board
- Coy asked for clarity if the earlier discussion meant that the additional \$2,000 would be taken away from her for the additional duties with the center
- Paul confirmed that it would be and told Coy he would talk to her after the meeting
- Dolores Florent asked Jay if he would re-read the motion in regards to Coy's increased salary for the extra duties which he read aloud for everyone
- Paul interrupted the discussion and stated that he'll gather all the information together at another time but he needed to hurry the meeting along
- Paul mentioned that the adoption of the budget would be deferred until the next meeting based on the salary adjustments

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- Paul asked for a motion to defer the budget until next meeting

*A motion was made by Nicole Veillon and seconded by Delores Florent to differ the budget until next meeting so as to incorporate the action taken by the board in regarding raises. The motion was unanimously approved.*

- Paul mentioned to Coy that they will visit with her on all the issues and after having private discussions if she is not satisfied with the discussions then she can be on the agenda and voice her opinions on the record
- Paul felt that was an appropriate way to handle it so as not to spend time discussing things when they're not on the same page

*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.