

RIVER PARISHES

TOURIST COMMISSION

Board Meeting | December 14, 2023 | Official Minutes

The River Parishes Convention, Tourist and Visitors Commission met on Thursday, December 14, 2023, at 5:00 PM at the River Parishes Tourist Commission Office, 330 Belle Terre Boulevard, Suite 205, LaPlace, Louisiana, 70068.

Call To Order

Chairwoman Elizabeth Joseph called the meeting to order at 5:05 PM.

Roll Call

Willma Harvey, Director of Sales and Business Development called the roll.

Board Member	Board Assignment	Attendance
Elizabeth Joseph	Chairwoman	Present
Terrence Jones	Vice-Chairman	Present
Camella Landry	Secretary-Treasurer	Present
Robert Taylor	Commissioner	Present
Steven Bourgeois	Commissioner	Not Present at Roll Call
Noble Benoit	Commissioner	Present
Ricardo Smith	Commissioner	Not Present at Roll Call
Tracy Smith	Commissioner	Absent
Vacant	Commissioner	***

Prayer and Pledge of Allegiance

Commissioner Noble Benoit gave the prayer, and Commissioner Robert Taylor led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Agenda

Commissioner Camella Landry motioned to approve the December 14, 2023, Agenda. Commissioner Robert Taylor seconded the motion. Chairwoman Elizabeth Joseph called the question with the following results:

Elizabeth Joseph	Voted	Yes
Terrence Jones	Voted	Yes
Camella Landry	Voted	Yes
Robert Taylor	Voted	Yes
Steven Bourgeois	Not Present	Not Present
Noble Benoit	Voted	Yes
Ricardo Smith	Not Present	Not Present
Tracy Smith	Voted	Absent

The motion, having been duly made and seconded, and a favorable vote received from the Board, Chairwoman Elizabeth Joseph declared the motion adopted on December 14, 2023.

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Public Comment

Chairwoman Elizabeth Joseph asked if there were any public comments. There were no public comments.

Commissioners Ricardo Smith and Steven Bourgeois arrived to the meeting.

Approval of Minutes

Willma Harvey noted an error on page 2 of the November 16, 2023, minutes. She advised the Board that Commissioner Elizabeth Joseph's last name, Joseph, was inadvertently left off under Public Comment.

Commissioner Terrence Jones motioned to approve the November 16, 2023, meeting minutes. Commissioner Steven Bourgeois seconded the motion. Chairwoman Elizabeth Joseph called the question with the following results:

Elizabeth Joseph	Voted	Yes
Terrence Jones	Voted	Yes
Camella Landry	Voted	Yes
Robert Taylor	Voted	Yes
Steven Bourgeois	Voted	Yes
Noble Benoit	Voted	Yes
Ricardo Smith	Voted	Yes
Tracy Smith	Voted	Absent

The motion, having been duly made and seconded, and a favorable vote received from the Board, Chairwoman Elizabeth Joseph declared the motion adopted on December 14, 2023.

Financials

Executive Director Denise Burrell reported that the November 2023 Financials will be presented at the February 2024 Commission Meeting. Given the end of the year, the information was not submitted in ample time to the CPA firm to have the report prepared for the December 2023 Commission Meeting.

Commissioner Terrence Jones inquired if the CPA firm could submit a summary for the Board to review the financials.

Chairwoman Elizabeth Joseph explained that it is normal for CPAs to be very busy during the month of December.

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director, Denise Burrell, introduced Mr. R. J. Ory, President of the Louisiana Steam Train Association. Mr. Ory provided an update of the steam train attraction that is planned to be brought to Garyville, Louisiana. Funds are coming in to make this new upcoming attraction a reality.

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Executive Director Burrell reported the following:

- Martin and Pellegrin performed the 2022-2023 audit in the last week of November 2023. Martin and Pellegrin will provide the results through an official letter and present the findings at the February 2024 Commission Meeting.
- Louisiana's River Parishes is in Bonfire Season, and our Bonfire Country mascot, Saint the Alligator, is decorated for the season.
- The River Parishes Tourist Commission sponsored the Bonfire Festival, which included hosting Mr. Mark Niedelson, Producer/Director of Shadow Dance Productions, who attended the festival, filmed live, and conducted live interviews. Ms. Burrell distributed a video of the Papa Noel Documentary at the festival produced by Mr. Niedelson.
- The 4th Quarter Marketing Partner Quarterly Luncheon Meeting is December 19, 2023, at the River Parishes Community College, St. Charles United Way Campus in Boutte, Louisiana.
- The December 2023 Sales and Marketing & Public Relations Reports are in the Commissioners binders for review.

Chairwoman, Elizabeth Joseph, gave an update about American Cruise Lines as follows:

- The dock is being built.
- The ship will land twice a week.
- Shelly Hartfield, the Director of Product Development, is the key contact for shore excursion requirements and was presented with various attractions that would be good for shore excursions.

Conferences | FAM Tours

Denise Burrell attended the Travel South USA International Showcase during the period of December 3-7, 2023, in Memphis, Tennessee. She met with leading international tour and travel planners from across the world.

Willma Harvey attended the United States Tour Operators Association Annual Conference and Marketplace from December 2-7, 2023, in Los Angeles California. She had appointments with leading domestic and international tour operators.

Willma Harvey reported that the Holidays in Louisiana's River Region Familiarization Tour took place December 9-12, 2023. The focus of the FAM was the unique experiences the region offers during the Christmas-Holiday season, and Louisiana's River Parishes portion focused primarily on our brand, Bonfire Country. The participating local partners were Oak Alley Plantation, Felicity Plantation, Legends Restaurant and Sports Bar, the Hampton Inn in LaPlace, Chung's Heavenly Café, Saint, the Alligator Bonfire mascot, Blood, Sweat, and Bonfires, R.J. Ory-The Bank, and St. John the Baptist Parish Economic Development Department. Lewis Coaches of

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LaPlace, Louisiana, was the transportation provider, and the participating regional partners were Visit Kenner, St. Tammany Parish, Tangipahoa Parish, Ascension Parish, and Jefferson Parish. This was the first time the six regions coordinated a regional FAM together, and ten tour and travel planners from across the United States experienced the destinations.

Executive Director, Denise Burrell, reported the following upcoming events:

- GNO Inc. Annual Luncheon, New Orleans, LA, January 12, 2024
- Louisiana Travel Association Annual Meeting, New Orleans, LA, January 16, 2024
- River Region Chamber of Commerce Annual Banquet, Luling, LA, January 18, 2024
- DC Mardi Gras, Washington, D.C., January 24-28, 2024

Community Engagement | Events

Executive Director Denise Burrell reported that the Bonfires on the Levee | Lighting of the Bonfires will take place on December 23, 2023, instead of December 24, 2023, due to the upcoming inclement weather on Christmas Eve, December 24, 2023.

Board Chair Report

Commissioner Noble Benoit reported that the Contracts Committee will review the Deveney Advertising Agency contract for line-item activities the agency can perform while under contract. In January 2024, an assessment will determine if the River Parishes Tourist Commission renews the Deveney contract or Request for Proposals. The contract with Deveney ends on December 31, 2023.

The next Commission Meeting is scheduled for February 15, 2024.

Adjourn

Commissioner Terrence Jones motioned to adjourn the December 14, 2023, Commission Meeting. Commissioner Steven Bourgeois seconded the motion. President Elizabeth Joseph called the question with the following results:

Elizabeth Joseph	Voted	Yes
Terrence Jones	Voted	Yes
Camella Landry	Voted	Yes
Robert Taylor	Voted	Yes
Steven Bourgeois	Voted	Yes
Noble Benoit	Voted	Yes
Ricardo Smith	Voted	Yes
Tracy Smith	Voted	Absent

The motion, having been duly made and seconded, and a favorable vote received from the Board, Chairwoman Elizabeth Joseph declared the movement adopted on December 14, 2023.