



**ST. TAMMANY PARISH TOURIST & CONVENTION COMMISSION**  
**BOARD RETREAT**  
**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2018**

Prior to the start of the Retreat, Commission Counsel Thomas Huval swore in new commissioner, Robert Cook.

Chairman Thomas J. Smith, Jr. then called the Retreat to order on Tuesday, February 6, 2018, at 8:30 a.m. at the St. Tammany Parish Tourist and Convention Commission, 68099 Highway 59, Mandeville, Louisiana. Mr. Smith delivered an invocation.

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT**

Robert Cook  
Sharon Lo Drucker  
Bonnie Eades  
Mark Myers  
Susan Nuss  
Marlaine Peachey  
Thomas J. Smith, Jr.

**COMMISSIONERS EXCUSED**

**COMMISSIONERS ABSENT**

**OLD BUSINESS**

▶ **SUMMARY OF TOURISM RESEARCH – RANDALL TRAVEL MARKETING**

Judy Randall gave the Executive Summary of the results of the 15-month-long research study conducted by her firm, Randall Travel Marketing, Inc. The purpose of the study was to look at the performance of the STPTCC and also to hear the voice of the customer.

Ms. Randall brought in five of the top professionals in this industry to review the study: Dr. Suzanne Cook, Dr. Larry Gustke, Bill Hardman, Bill Geist and Kyle Edmiston. She asked them to make any recommendations they felt were necessary.

▶ **PRESENTATION OF DMAP CODE OF ETHICS**

Donna said the time is right for the Tourist Commission to become accredited through the Destination Marketing Accreditation Program. They look at everything from sales and marketing to best practices and board governance. DMAP has a Code of Ethics for Boards and Donna asked her board members to read it. Bonnie Eades made **A MOTION** to accept the DMAP Code of Ethics and Sharon Drucker seconded. **The Motion** passed unanimously.

▶ **DISCUSSION OF POLICIES AND GUIDELINES FOR BOARD MEMBERS AND BOARD EVALUATION PROCESS**

Mark Myers made **A MOTION** to table the agenda item until the next board meeting. Sharon Drucker seconded. **The Motion** passed unanimously.

▶ **SWOT ANALYSIS**

There was discussion of strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of the Tourist Commission. Some of the strengths included staff, teamwork, research and data, financial accountability, creativity and a proven track record. Weaknesses included budget and revenue. Strengths and weaknesses of the destination itself were discussed, with proximity to New Orleans, newer accommodations, Tammany Trace and unique towns being counted as assets. Lack of full service facilities and meeting space, lack of significant amenities on the water, and wayfinding and traffic were listed among the weaknesses.

▶ **DISCUSSION OF VISION STATEMENT AND MISSION STATEMENT**

The current Mission Statement is: "The mission of the St. Tammany Parish Tourist and Convention Commission is to market and promote St. Tammany Parish as a highly desirable destination for visitors, thereby increasing the economic

impact of tourism.” We must now have a “Vision Statement” in addition to a “Mission Statement” for the accreditation process. Donna and Renee will work on them and will present at the February 27 meeting

#### ► STRATEGIC PLAN

The group then discussed the Strategic Plan which includes six key objectives:

- Generating visitation from individuals to St. Tammany Parish
- Generating visitation from groups
- Securing resources to achieve the mission and objectives \*
- Building community support for tourism and the Commission \*\*
- Encourage product development and infrastructure improvements that are consistent with the Commission’s mission and the brand for the destination\*\*\*
- Conduct research to determine marketing strategies and track performance measures

Updates to current strategic plan that were discussed:

\*Discussion of objective to secure resources to achieve the mission and objectives:

The board and staff discussed current funding mechanisms: the 3% local hotel occupancy tax and the current portion we receive of the dedication of state sales tax collected at local hotels that goes into the St. Tammany Parish Fund through HB 1. We currently receive 25% of the \$1.9 million state appropriation, or \$475,000, essentially equal to one penny of occupancy tax. Given the state’s current budget woes, Donna has heard from many legislators that these statutory dedications are extremely vulnerable. The possibility of collecting a 4<sup>th</sup> penny of local hotel occupancy tax was discussed. Most CVBs in Louisiana, including our comp set CVBs, collect four pennies of local hotel occupancy tax, and have been for years, which has put us at a funding disadvantage, particularly after the redirection of state funds that took place in 2012. The industry experts who were interviewed as part of Judy Randall’s assessment of next steps and best practices for us all indicated that we pursue collecting a fourth penny of local hotel occupancy tax. Since it seems possible, even likely, that the statutory dedication may be reduced or even eliminated entirely, the board discussed researching collecting the fourth penny. Donna and Susan will set up a meeting with the president of the Northshore Lodging Association and report back.

\*\* Discussion of objective to build community support for tourism and the Commission:

The board and staff discussed creating a “speakers bureau” with current board members asked to speak to various community groups they are involved with, at least four speaking engagement per year. Staff will develop a PowerPoint presentation and collateral for these presentations and board members were asked to submit a list of organizations they would like to speak to in the coming year by the April 24 board meeting, along with any potential speaker fees. There was also discussion of creating an annual “tourism summit,” possibly in conjunction with National Tourism Week in May.

\*\*\* Discussion of objective to encourage product development and infrastructure improvements that are consistent with the Commission’s mission and the brand for the destination.

The board and staff discussed how development in our destination over the past ten years has evolved and compared to RTM’s research into what our visitors and meeting planners would like to see in terms of future development. Discussion also included current and future development in comp set destinations. A potential development of interest to the board, particularly given that it is consistent with both our brand and also what research indicates is needed to grow the leisure and group segments, is the possible public/private partnership development at Fontainebleau through the new foundation set up to help generate revenue for state parks. The board was asked to consider an investment from our fund balance for a market analysis, and if that study is favorable, a subsequent conceptual study of what could be successfully developed at Fontainebleau. This could potentially be a significant project, and would open doors for us in markets that

we can't currently serve. Based on that and the research data, Sharon Lo Drucker made **A MOTION** to authorize up to \$150,000 total for the completion of the two studies: a market analysis, and if that study is favorable, a conceptual study. Mark Myers seconded and **The Motion** carried.

Christina Cooper, Renee Kientz and Zondra Jones reported on the efforts of the Communications and Sales Department. They provided the board with cost breakdowns for advertising, website maintenance, lead generation, collateral material, trade shows, association memberships, sales calls, FAMs, site inspections and other measures that are required for their departments to continue to produce results.

T. J. said the Retreat exceeded his expectations and thanked the Board, staff and Judy Randall for their participation.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Marlaine Peachey made **A MOTION** to adjourn and Bonnie Eades seconded. **The Motion** carried and the meeting adjourned at 4:55 PM.

**NEXT MEETING**

The next Regular Board of Commissioners meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 27, 2018, at 2:00 PM, at the Northshore Harbor Center in Slidell.

Minutes Respectfully Submitted,

*S / Rae Shipley*  
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Rae Shipley  
Recording Secretary

*S / Thomas J. Smith, Jr.*  
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Thomas J. Smith, Jr.  
Chairman