

Louisiana Tourism Development Commission
Board of Director Meeting
March 9, 2022
1:00 pm
Baton Rouge Marriott
Baton Rouge, LA

Minutes

Call to Order: Chair Alana Cooper called the meeting to order at 1:03 pm

Roll Call: Emily Brooks called roll. There were ten members present and a quorum.

Present: Chair Alana Cooper, Ben Berthelot, Paul Arrigo, Morgan Moss, William Langkopp, Al Schof, Brett Bares, Maurice Leblanc, Janice Delerno, Thomas Carmody (SOS Ardoin)

Absent: Lt. Governor Nungesser, Mary Ann Nowlin, Celeste Gomez, Diane D'Amico, Anna Koch Tusa, Melissa Dottolo, Linda Curtis-Sparks, Alice Scarborough

Approval of Minutes: Chair Cooper called for approval of the minutes from the last meeting. Ben Berthelot moved, seconded by Al Schof. Vote carried and the minutes were approved.

Cooper thanked everyone for attending and introduced Doug Bourgeois, with Louisiana Office of Tourism (LOT) to speak.

Doug Bourgeois, Assistant Secretary of the Louisiana Office of Tourism, thanked everyone for attending the meeting and announced changes to the agenda.

Harlan provided an update on LOT Grant programs and funding distributed. Not all CVBs have taken advantage of the full 20K available, a few have requested nothing. Attractions Support Grants were created to aid in recovering events that were not supported by ARPA. A new grant program – Louisiana Attractions Support Grant is open to non-governmentally-operated attractions. Attractions may request up to \$20,000. This grant closes May 17th. Another new grant is the Festivals and Events Recovery Grant program which will open July 1, 2022 and run through June 30, 2023.

Bourgeois provided members with an overview of the ARPA funds and indicated where the funds were earmarked for marketing, advertising, special projects and other tourism initiatives – these funds are solely for attractions.

Bourgeois spoke on the Louisiana Office of Tourism's Industry Portal – www.LouisianaTravel.com/industry. Bourgeois introduced the Sunshine Report Card presentation. The LOT sunshine plan can be found on the industry portal. This plan was created due to losses from the pandemic with the goal of bringing tourism back better than before.

Bourgeois stated that the Louisiana is a Trip campaign was based on research from what we've done in the past. We're constantly changing what we're doing and who we're targeting and knew we could reach new areas.

Louisiana is known for parades and LOT was able to participate in two major parades.

- Macy's parade – partnered with Macy's and designed a float that would convey Louisiana "Louisiana Celebration Gator" ...brought in Jon Batiste. Berthelot explained that the ROI on this parade was fantastic.
- Tournament of Roses – partnered with TOR and designed a beautiful float for ~\$430K. Hosted activations in Pasadena surrounding TOR Parade including Louisiana alumni, food, and expats.

Each LOT section gave updates on their projects and promotions. Some examples include but are not limited to Gas Station Eats, Garden & Gun, Arthur Hardy, Virtual and In-Person Events and Tradeshow, Virtual and In-Person FAMs, Chicago Mission, Tournacation, etc. CVB partners can join Crowdriff Story Network. Civil Rights Trail has new markers set to be unveiled over the next year. Rural Tourism in Louisiana is doing well and the Byways have received national recognition.

LOT offers grant support and online webinars with the goal of educating industry partners across Louisiana.

Occupancy increased 9.5% over Dec 2019, REVPAR decreased 9% since 2019. Coxwell explained that the STR report is only report we can use to gauge data outside of calling the individual hotels.

Website visits are up 146% year over year and 119% over 2019 (calendar year).

Coxwell explained that we get info from Trumpet, Visitor Profiles, Visitor Spending, and Zartico. We know their origin market, points of interest, etc. How many people are going to attractions and which ones are visited the most.

Ryburn and Bourgeois explained that the international markets started to come back before the Omicron variant but is starting to come back again. The difficulty is that each country, airline, etc. has specific restrictions and timelines that we have to monitor and they change constantly. Cooper noted it would not be fast and quick for international tourism recovery.

Berthelot (Ben) thanked the LOT team and complimented the work they've been doing but asked what specifically has increased the website traffic. Berthelot (Jennifer) said it was largely organic, LOT branded and adjusted the website to be ADA compliant. Ultimately, it could be pent up travel desire. Coxwell said COVID recovery is a major reason and holidays are also a cause for an uptick in travel. Weill noted a trend in desktop over mobile website visits. Ney asked about ADA compliance for websites. Berthelot (Jennifer) explained that color schemes, fonts, and screen readers are all ways to make the websites more ADA compliant but it's a sliding scale.

Chair Cooper noted the next meeting will be on August 23 at Summit in Lake Charles and will include historical marker proposals to review. Coxwell will submit them to the commission at least 2 weeks prior to meeting. Cooper strongly encouraged the commission to review them carefully for content and that it's something that's applicable as the applicants are paying for the markers themselves.

Bourgeois noted that the Seafood Tourism Reception will be on Monday May 2nd at the Louisiana State museum in Capitol Park. Cooper noted that session starts next Monday 3/14 and Tourism Day at the capitol is 4/12.

Carmody (Ardoin) noted that he had seen the Old State Capitol but not a lot of other state museums. Bourgeois said LOT has been working on better promotion of them.

Langkopp asked about employment problems in the industry. Arrigo said we need to pool our resources for workforce development. Cooper suggested to look at what's working in for other parts of the state and what's not. She also noted we need to work on better promotion of our industry and why we love being a part of it. "Keep telling your story, over and over again," she noted.

Other comments – none

Cooper thanked Ney for hosting the meeting at his hotel.

Cooper called for a motion to adjourn.

Arrigo motioned to adjourn, seconded by Carmody (SOS Ardoin). Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 2:46 pm.