

JOINT SUBCOMMITTEE ON TOURISM

Minutes of Meeting
1997 Interim
October 2, 1997

I. CALL TO ORDER

Representative John Travis, Co-chairman and Senator Ken Hollis, Co-chairman of the Joint Subcommittee on Tourism, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. in the Garden Oak Room of the Holiday Inn, New Iberia, Louisiana.

II. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Representative John Travis,
Co-chairman
Representative Mickey Frith
Representative Herman Hill
Representative Mike Michot
Representative Ed Murray
Representative Gil Pinac
Representative Diane Winston
Representative Robert Faucheux, Jr.
Representative Troy Hebert

Senator Ken Hollis,
Co-chairman
Senator Mike Branch
Senator Wilson Fields
Senator Mike Smith

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Representative Bob Barton
Representative Naomi Farve
Representative Dan Flavin
Representative Arthur Morrell
Representative Tank Powell
Representative Pete Schneider
Representative Sharon Weston

Senator Francis Heitmeier
Senator Louis Lambert
Senator Mike Robichaux

III. STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT

Cindy Mancuso, House Attorney
Sandy Painting, House Secretary
Kevin Hayes, Senate Attorney
Betty Marsh, Senate Secretary
Manch Cadwallader, House Sergeant at Arms
Shorty Baudoin, Senate Sergeant at Arms

IV. DISCUSSION

Mr. Will Langlinois, Parish President, New Iberia, (no address provided) welcomed the committee to the New Iberia area and thanked the members for choosing this area.

Mr. Gerald Breaux, Lafayette Convention and Visitors Bureau, P.O. Box 52066, Lafayette, Louisiana 70505, (318) 232-3737, appeared before the committee and stated that culture is the reason for travel. He provided the committee with statistics on travelers who choose historical landmarks, regional cuisine, and beaches for their reasons to travel.

Mr. A. J. LeBlanc, Acadian Village, 200 Green Leaf Dr., Lafayette, Louisiana 70506, (318) 981-2489, appeared before the committee and stated that 80% of the visitors to the Acadian area are international. He suggested that some attention should be directed to the state troopers and the traffic problem from Texas through our state.

Ms. Mary Wright, Louisiana Tourism Promotion District, 619 Woodvale Ave., Lafayette, Louisiana 70503-3536, (318) 981-3918, appeared before the committee and gave an update on the promotion of tourism in Louisiana. She stated that Louisiana's tourism industry is increasing due to riverboats, aircraft travel clubs, coaches, jazz programs, and scenic by-ways. She stated that the office of tourism has produced a scenic by-ways video which has recently won national recognition by the American Recreation Coalition. She stated that the Creole Nature Trail in Calcasieu has been selected by the national association as the only one in the south and one of ten in the nation as being worthy of their merit. She provided the committee with brochures, a calendar of events, and a map of the scenic by-ways produced by the office of tourism.

Mr. Herman Gesser, City of New Iberia, Main Street manager, (no address provided) appeared before the committee and presented a short instructional video on retirement recruitment. He stated that the fifty-plus market had potential for increasing the economic development of Louisiana.

Ms. Renee Miller, Children's Museum of Acadiana, 201 E. Congress St., Lafayette, Louisiana 70501, (318) 232-8136, appeared before the committee and stated that the Children's Museum of Acadiana serves school children, scouts, church groups, and visitors from all over the world. She stated that the museum attempts to provide children with the knowledge of how everyday life works with exhibits of an operating room, grocery store, bank, ambulance, and recycling area. She stated that the opportunities for service work by our youth to give back to their communities provide for a byproduct of tourism in making Louisiana stronger and in a position to offer more.

Ms. Carol McManus, President, Louisiana Travel Promotion Association, Mulates Restaurant, 325 Mills Avenue, Breaux Bridge, Louisiana 70517, appeared before the committee and reiterated the concerns regarding the negative image of Louisiana which resulted from the airing of the Dateline television report. She thanked the legislature for the increase in the tourism budget. She stated that the industry of tourism is the second largest employer in the state of Louisiana. She suggested that more attention should be directed toward public awareness with more brochures and printed materials for the public.

Ms. Shereen Minvielle, Director, Rip Van Winkle Gardens, 5505 Rip Van Winkle Road, New Iberia, Louisiana 70560, (318) 365-3332, advised the committee of a marketing alliance program between five of the local tourist attractions in the New Iberia area. She stated that the local attractions were working together on cooperative advertising which allowed them to have larger ads in the tour guide and a cooperative billboard on Highway 90. She stated that this program created a savings for tourists which brought about longer stays and created collaboration for a momentum to promote all attractions.

Ms. Carrie Gautreaux, Director, St. Mary Parish Tourist Commission, P.O. Box 7332, New Iberia, Louisiana 70381, 1-800-256-2931, appeared before the committee and stated that the commission constantly received complaints regarding the lack of road signs. She suggested that the implementation of an "800" telephone number may be a resolution for the community to police the signage problem. She also stated that litter remains a number one problem in the state of Louisiana and that several chambers of commerce were initiating programs to control the litter problem.

Mr. Nicholas Neylon, Wedell-Williams Aviation Museum, 394 Airport Circle, Patterson, Louisiana 70392, (504) 395-7067, provided the committee with a brief history of the museum. He stated that the museum was a part of the state museum system which displayed historical aircraft and original flight suits. He stated that the museum hosted astronauts and provided programs for school children. He stated that the museum needed more funding as it was not currently large enough to display all of its aircraft and that the building did not meet the humidity standards for professional museums.

Ms. Sandra Davis, Konriko Rice Company/Conrad Rice Mill, 307 Ann Street, New Iberia, Louisiana 70562, (318) 364-7242, appeared before the committee and reiterated some of the previously stated concerns regarding the need for additional and improved road signage, especially in the rural areas, and the litter problem. She stated that it was imperative to continue our advertising program. She stated that they were losing some of their business to the Mississippi coast and suggested that Louisiana needed to diversify advertising to include historical and educational attractions.

Mr. Louis Cornay, Chretien Point Bed and Breakfast, 665 Chretien Point Road, Sunset, Louisiana 70584, (318) 662-5876, appeared before the committee and reiterated the problems which resulted from the Dateline television special where highway patrols were stopping travelers unnecessarily. He stated that his business had decreased by approximately \$10,000 since the airing of said article and asked the committee for its help. He praised the recent issue of the Louisiana Tour Guide and asked that it be continued.

Ms. Jennifer Hotard, Director of sales, Holiday Inn, 520 Roderick St., Morgan City, Louisiana 70380, (504) 385-2200, appeared before the committee and stated that the hotel had recently opened 42 new rooms in July and all are completely occupied which she felt was a good sign of growth in the tourism industry. She reiterated the above testimony regarding the litter problem and signage problem.

Ms. Audrey Brignac, Tourism Coordinator, City of St. Martinville, P.O. Box 379, St. Martinville, Louisiana 70582, (318) 394-2233, appeared before the committee and reiterated the above testimony regarding the litter program and suggested a "Trash Louisiana" campaign. She stated that

approximately 1,000 tour buses visit St. Martinville each year. She also reiterated the problem with road signs.

Ms. Jane Breaux, Iberia Parish Tourist Commission, 2704 Highway 14, New Iberia, Louisiana 70560, (318) 365-1540, appeared before the committee and reiterated the testimony of the above speakers. She thanked the committee for visiting the New Iberia area and allowing them a chance to voice their tourism pros and cons and also thanked them for the funding to the office of tourism. She stated that advertising was very important and that without the brochures and advertisement provided by the office of tourism, New Iberia would not receive the large number of visitors that they are presently receiving.

Mr. Pat Oneillion, P.O. Box 9723, New Iberia, Louisiana (318) 364-2186, presented the committee with a copy of a September, 1947 newspaper article from the Daily Iberian which declared New Iberia the state capitol of Louisiana for one day and stated that the plantation home chosen for this event was a potential tourist attraction and suggested that the committee visit the home.

Mr. Jay Huner, University of Southwestern Louisiana (USL), College of Applied Life Science, P.O. Box 44650, Lafayette, Louisiana 70504, (318) 482-6640, appeared before the committee and stated that the university supported the regional tourism industry directly through its College of Applied Life Sciences' Hospitality, Restaurant, and Tourism Program in the School of Human Resources and its Division of Continuing Education with short courses and its Elderhostel Program. He stated that he was the director of USL's Crawfish Research Center and that more and more tourists are visiting Louisiana to experience the unique crawfish cuisine and to see the crawfish farms. He stated that he was glad to see government agencies, led by the office of tourism, interacting with the tourism industry and agricultural interests to develop the infrastructure needed for our agricultural industry to take full advantage of the opportunities in rural tourism, of which eco-tourism (bird watching) is a vital part, and that USL will continue to be an active participant in this endeavor.

Ms. Barbara Roy, Louisiana office of tourism, P.O. Box 94291, Baton Rouge, Louisiana (504) 342-8125, advised the committee that a litter control conference was scheduled in Baton Rouge on October 20, 1997.

V. OTHER BUSINESS

The committee attended a press conference at the Holiday Inn in New Iberia the previous day, October 1, 1997, and toured Rip Van Winkle Gardens, Conrad Rice Mill, Konriko Company Store, Shadows-on-The-Teche, and Oaklawn Manor Plantation.

VI. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:40 a.m. The committee continued on a tour of Vermilionville which was hosted by Lisa Landry, Executive Director, 1600 Surrey St., Lafayette, Louisiana 70508, 1-800-99-Bayou.

Respectfully submitted,

John Travis, Co-Chairman

Date Approved: _____