

## JOINT SUBCOMMITTEE ON TOURISM

Minutes of Meeting  
1997-98 Interim  
March 5, 1998

### I. CALL TO ORDER

Representative Arthur Morrell, acting Co-chairman of the Joint Subcommittee on Tourism, called the meeting to order at 9:20 a.m. at the Terrebonne Parish Council Quarters, Houma, Louisiana.

### II. ROLL CALL

#### **MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Representative Naomi Farve  
Representative Mickey Frith  
Representative Arthur Morrell  
Representative Ed Murray  
Representative Tank Powell  
Representative Clo Fontenot (ad hoc)  
Representative Tommy Wright (ad hoc)  
Representative Reggie Dupree  
(area legislator)

#### **MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Representative John Travis,  
Co-chairman  
Representative Bob Barton  
Representative Dan Flavin  
Representative Herman Hill  
Representative Mike Michot  
Representative Gil Pinac  
Representative Pete Schneider  
Representative Sharon Weston  
Representative Diane Winston

Senator Ken Hollis,  
Co-chairman  
Senator Mike Branch  
Senator Wilson Fields  
Senator Francis Heitmeier  
Senator Louis Lambert  
Senator Mike Robichaux  
Senator Mike Smith

### III. STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT

Cindy Mancuso, House Attorney  
Billy Gothreaux, House Research Analyst  
Sandy Painting, House Secretary

**IV. DISCUSSION**

Ms. Carrie Gautreaux, Director, St. Mary Parish Tourist Commission, P.O. Box 2332, Morgan City, Louisiana 70381, (504) 395-4905, appeared before the committee and spoke regarding the marketing endeavors of the Cajun Coastline, which is a cooperative marketing effort between the parishes of St. Mary, Iberia, Terrebonne, and Lafourche. She stated that more could be accomplished if everyone pooled their funds. She stated that several brochures have been published on the Cajun Coastline and the Old Spanish Trail. She also stated that they were working on joint advertising, trade shows, and signage.

Ms. Carolyn Cheramie, Director, Lafourche Parish Tourist Commission, P.O. Box 340, Raceland, Louisiana 70394, (504) 537-5800, appeared before the committee and deferred testimony to the former director who recently retired, Ms. Natalie Dantin. Ms. Dantin stated that her area had a good product to sell but that it needed additional signage to direct tourists to the various attractions and areas. She stated that daily comments were made by tourists visiting the tourist commission office regarding the lack of signs. She asked that the committee work with the Department of Transportation and Development regarding additional signs from the TODS (Tourism Oriented Directional Signs) program for the rural areas.

Ms. Stacie Atkins, Marketing Director, Oak Alley Plantation, 3645 Highway 18, Vacherie, Louisiana 70090, (504) 265-2151, appeared before the committee and spoke about the ongoing litter problem and the poor rural road conditions. She advised the committee that a master plan is currently being developed for a Mississippi River Road Commission to preserve River Road and its attractions. She stated that there was nothing currently in place for in-state promotion and that separate funds need to be set aside for this purpose. She stated that tourist attraction attendance had declined this year and that something needed to be done to determine the reason for this decline.

Representative Fontenot suggested that Lt. Governor Blanco's office address the current decline in tourism by possibly performing a study to determine the reasons for this decline.

Ms. Sharon Bergeron, Civic Pride Committee-Terrebonne, 305 Oak Alley Dr., Houma, Louisiana 70360, (504) 853-7410, appeared before the committee and reiterated the litter issue not only regarding our roads but also our waterways and asked the committee to pursue this issue by possibly placing the responsibility with the Department of Environmental Quality or the Lt. Governor's office.

Representative Wright stated that the state of Colorado requires a deposit on beverage cans and bottles and that possibly the state of Louisiana could benefit from such a deposit being required in this state.

Mr. Jerry G. Cobb, Wildwood Park, Inc., 6045 Bayou Black, Gibson, Louisiana 70356, (504) 575-3291, appeared before the committee and informed the members of certain problems he was experiencing with the development of this new park. He stated that a non-hazardous waste site permit had recently been issued for a site directly behind the park and felt that this might hinder its development and

progress. He stated that he also was having problems with receiving a permit from the fire marshal's office for his KOA Campground within the park and asked the committee for its help. He reiterated the statements previously made regarding the poor road conditions in the rural areas.

Representative Farve urged Mr. Cobb to continue his fight regarding the non-hazardous waste site and to submit to Lt. Governor Blanco a vision package with three-year and five-year projections including the funds that will be brought in for the state.

Representative Dupree asked Mr. Cobb to contact him regarding scheduling a meeting with other area legislators and the fire marshal to receive the KOA permit.

Mr. Kevin Belanger, Senior Planner, Terrebonne Parish, P. O. Box 6097, Houma, Louisiana 70377, (504) 813-6565, appeared before the committee and spoke regarding requests for information regarding modes of transportation in Cajun country from various tourism groups such as cruise lines and travel agencies. He reiterated the previous testimony regarding the conditions of the roads and the signage problem. He stated that his office had recently rewritten its sign ordinance to improve informational signage. He stated that the problems he experienced with the Department of Transportation and Development was not obtaining the signs but the time involved in the approval process.

Mr. Brian J. Borne, Houma Main Street Program, 574 Goode Street, Thibodaux, Louisiana 70301, (504) 873-6890, appeared before the committee and explained to the committee that the Houma Main Street Program is distinguished by a 118 building national register historical district which encompasses the downtown and immediate adjacent residential areas. He stated that most of the buildings date from the 1910's through the 1930's which was a period of growth and prosperity generated mainly by the seafood industry. He provided the committee with statistics regarding new jobs and new buildings in the Houma area since it began the Main Street Program.

Representative Morrell inquired about the incentive of a Main Street Program and if any tax breaks were offered.

Mr. Borne stated that a town must apply to the state to become a main street community and once approved, the parish or city matches the amount of the state grant. He stated that this program revitalizes a downtown. He stated that there were tax incentives such as tax abatements and property tax relief. He stated that the Main Street Program also created new jobs.

Representative Fontenot stated that the Main Street Program was a great program and that all towns needed this program due to the mall business. He stated that only seven out of 60 applicants were approved last year due to the lack of funding.

Representative Wright suggested that Lt. Governor Blanco be contacted and asked to provide a projection of additional funds required if no applications for the Main Street Program were denied.

Mr. Kerry St. Pe', Director, Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program, P. O. Box 2663, Thibodaux, Louisiana 70310, (800) 259-0869, appeared before the committee and explained to the committee that an estuary was a coastal region where salt and fresh water mixed. He stated that there are one hundred two estuaries in the nation with 28 being given national significance which includes the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program. He stated that because of this classification, this program has the potential to promote tourism. He commended the committee for its efforts to promote tourism. He reiterated the previous testimony regarding the state's litter problem and asked the committee to continue its efforts. He stated that the barrier islands were critical habitats for birds and eco tourism. He stated that additional advertising is needed for birding in Louisiana. He stated that the barrier islands are in danger and many things were being considered to attempt to rebuild the barrier islands that have been destroyed. He mentioned that coastal erosion was another problem that needed additional attention in order to keep the wetlands. He stated that a football field size parcel of land is lost every fifteen minutes due to coastal erosion.

Ms. Connie Scheer, Sportsman's Paradise, 6830 Highway 56, Chauvin, Louisiana 70344, appeared before the committee and distributed a handout regarding charter boat captains standards in Louisiana being the same as saltwater captains standards. She reiterated the previous testimony regarding road improvements and the signage problems (see attached).

Dr. Mike Flynn, President, Houma Terrebonne Chamber of Commerce, no address provided, appeared before the committee and commended the committee on its tourism efforts. He stated that the Cajun Coastline provides 25% of the entire country's oil and gas industry. He stated that due to this reason only, the road traffic in the area has tripled in the last 18 months. He stated that not only are road improvements needed, but additional evacuation routes are also needed.

Ms. Sharon Alford, Executive Director, Houma-Terrebonne Tourist Commission, P. O. Box 2792, Houma, Louisiana 70361, thanked the committee for touring the Houma-Terrebonne area. She reiterated the previous testimony regarding our road problems and our litter problem and suggested stricter laws regarding the dumping of trash. She thanked the legislature for the funding provided for tourism and asked that it continue.

Mr. W. J. Rhodes, Terrebonne Enhancement Program, 500 Collins St., Houma, Louisiana 70364, appeared before the committee and suggested the need for federal funding to promote educational programs in our schools concerning the litter problems in our state.

## **V. OTHER BUSINESS**

The committee attended a press conference at the Holiday Inn in Houma the previous day, March 4, 1998, followed by a tour of CoCo Marina at Cocodrie, LUMCON, Bayou Drive, A Cajun Man's Swamp Tour, Wildwood Park, Jean Lafitte National Park, and Oak Alley Plantation.

**VI. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no announcements.

**VII. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:50 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Arthur Morrell, Acting Co-Chairman

Date Approved: \_\_\_\_\_