

**HARRISON COUNTY TOURISM COMMISSION  
OFFICIAL MINUTES  
MARCH 24, 2009**

The Harrison County Tourism Commission met Wednesday, March 24, 2009 at 1:30 p.m., at its office located at 11975 Seaway Road, Gulfport, MS.

Commissioners Present: Beverly Martin, president; Rip Daniels, secretary; Wilma Rizzardi; Gary Ponthieux; Greg Van Stone; Bill Holmes, ex-officio

Commissioners absent: Kenneth Montana, vice president; Drew Allen, treasurer; Nicky Creel; Judge Danny Guice

HCTC Staff Members Present: Crystal Johnson, director, sales; Janice Jones, manager, public relations; Traci Dauro, executive assistant; Sharon McDonald, director, finance; Stefanie Beaugez; regional sales manager; Gary Benson, national sales manager

Others Present: Hugh Keating, legal counsel; Laura Hasty, Reed Guice, the Big Three; Linda Hornsby & Bob Bennett, MS Hotel & Lodging Assn; Berinda Logan, MS Hospitality & Rest Assn; Kristi Bennett, Airport Authority; Kenny Glavan, Holiday Garden Inn; Kit Musgrove, Hampton Inn; Scott Ratcliff, MS Gulf Coast Sports Commission; Henry Ward

Commissioner Martin called the meeting to order.

Commissioner Daniels made the motion to accept the agenda as presented. Seconded by Commissioner Ponthieux, the president called the question, with the following results:

|                        |             |        |
|------------------------|-------------|--------|
| Commissioner Allen     | Voted ----- | Absent |
| Commissioner Creel     | Voted ----- | Absent |
| Commissioner Daniels   | Voted ----- | Yes    |
| Commissioner Guice     | Voted ----- | Absent |
| Commissioner Montana   | Voted ----- | Absent |
| Commissioner Rizzardi  | Voted ----- | Yes    |
| Commissioner Ponthieux | Voted ----- | Yes    |
| Commissioner Van Stone | Voted ----- | Yes    |

The motion having been duly made, seconded, and a favorable vote received from the Commission, the president declared the motion adopted March 24, 2009.

Public

Linda Hornsby, MS Hotel & Lodging Assn. briefed the Commissioners of the hotel occupancy report for the month of February 2009.

Henry Ward, Tourism Business Solutions, showed the Commission a lighted map box with area attractions, hotels, golf, and restaurants. Mr. Ward would like help from the Commission to start making these informational boxes available to the hotels, attractions, and any other entity interested. Mr. Ward is requesting about \$3,000 from the Commission for 60 boxes at \$45 each. The Commission referred Mr. Ward to take advantage of the Commission "Marketing Assistance Program", a workshop will be held in April.

Minutes

Commissioner Daniels made a motion to accept the minutes from the February 18, 2009 meeting as presented. Seconded by Commissioner Rizzardi, the president called the question, with the following results:

|   |   |  |  |  |  |
|---|---|--|--|--|--|
| <i>Beverly Martin</i><br><i>President</i> | <i>Kenneth Montana</i><br><i>Vice President</i> | <i>Drew Allen</i><br><i>Treasurer</i>        | <i>Rip Daniels</i><br><i>Secretary</i>       | <i>Hugh Keating</i><br><i>Legal Counsel</i>  | <i>Richard Forester</i><br><i>Executive Director</i> |
| <i>Nicky Creel</i><br><i>Commissioner</i> | <i>Danny Guice</i><br><i>Commissioner</i>       | <i>Gary Ponthieux</i><br><i>Commissioner</i> | <i>Wilma Rizzardi</i><br><i>Commissioner</i> | <i>Greg Van Stone</i><br><i>Commissioner</i> | <i>Bill Holmes</i><br><i>Ex-Officio</i>              |

|                        |             |        |
|------------------------|-------------|--------|
| Commissioner Allen     | Voted ----- | Absent |
| Commissioner Creel     | Voted ----- | Absent |
| Commissioner Daniels   | Voted ----- | Yes    |
| Commissioner Guice     | Voted ----- | Absent |
| Commissioner Montana   | Voted ----- | Absent |
| Commissioner Rizzardi  | Voted ----- | Yes    |
| Commissioner Ponthieux | Voted ----- | Yes    |
| Commissioner Van Stone | Voted ----- | Yes    |

The motion having been duly made, seconded, and a favorable vote received from the Commission, the president declared the motion adopted March 24, 2009.

Treasurer's Report

Sharon McDonald reported the March 24, 2009, disbursements as follows: check disbursements for 03/24/09--\$220,111.53; total travel advance/reimbursements for February 2009 -- \$6,122.94; grand total disbursements--\$226,234.47. Commissioner Daniels moved these disbursements be approved. Seconded by Commissioner Rizzardi, the president called the question, with the following results:

|                        |             |        |
|------------------------|-------------|--------|
| Commissioner Allen     | Voted ----- | Absent |
| Commissioner Creel     | Voted ----- | Absent |
| Commissioner Daniels   | Voted ----- | Yes    |
| Commissioner Guice     | Voted ----- | Absent |
| Commissioner Montana   | Voted ----- | Absent |
| Commissioner Rizzardi  | Voted ----- | Yes    |
| Commissioner Ponthieux | Voted ----- | Yes    |
| Commissioner Van Stone | Voted ----- | Yes    |

The motion having been duly made, seconded, and a favorable vote received from the Commission, the president declared the motion adopted March 24, 2009.

Sharon McDonald presented the February 28, 2009, financial statements, reporting total assets of \$3,183,169.07; total liabilities \$100,544.79; total fund balance \$3,082,624.28; total liabilities & fund balance \$3,183,169.07; current revenue \$620,854.54; current expenditures \$328,527.02; for a net income of \$292,327.52. Commissioner Daniels moved these financial statements be approved. Seconded by Commissioner Van Stone, the president called the question with the following results:

|                        |             |        |
|------------------------|-------------|--------|
| Commissioner Allen     | Voted ----- | Absent |
| Commissioner Creel     | Voted ----- | Absent |
| Commissioner Daniels   | Voted ----- | Yes    |
| Commissioner Guice     | Voted ----- | Absent |
| Commissioner Montana   | Voted ----- | Absent |
| Commissioner Rizzardi  | Voted ----- | Yes    |
| Commissioner Ponthieux | Voted ----- | Yes    |
| Commissioner Van Stone | Voted ----- | Yes    |

The motion having been duly made, seconded, and a favorable vote received from the Commission, the president declared the motion adopted March 24, 2009.

Sharon McDonald reported on the room tax receipts. Fiscal year comparison of hotel sales tax collections for March 13, 2009 – actual 3% collection was \$231,469.55 with HCTC's 2.25% share being \$173,602.16 for a -1.17% change in total collection, and total loss of -4.31% year to year change, reflecting just this month's collections.

Sharon McDonald reported on the revenue received from World Choice Travel commission revenue for February 18, 2009 in the amount of \$331.88, for a total of \$2,428.69, since October 2008.

Old Business

The Commission decided to hold this item until the April meeting. Discussing Simpleview last bill.

New Business

Commissioner Van Stone made the motion to approve the request for convention incentives funds for the National Governors Assn, 2009 Annual Convention being held July 17-20, 2009 at the MS Coast Coliseum business in the amount of \$10,000. Seconded by Commissioner Ponthieux, the president called the question, with the following results:

|                        |             |        |
|------------------------|-------------|--------|
| Commissioner Allen     | Voted ----- | Absent |
| Commissioner Creel     | Voted ----- | Absent |
| Commissioner Daniels   | Voted ----- | Yes    |
| Commissioner Guice     | Voted ----- | Absent |
| Commissioner Montana   | Voted ----- | Absent |
| Commissioner Rizzardi  | Voted ----- | Yes    |
| Commissioner Ponthieux | Voted ----- | Yes    |
| Commissioner Van Stone | Voted ----- | Yes    |

The motion having been duly made, seconded, and a favorable vote received from the Commission, the president declared the motion adopted March 24, 2009.

Commissioner Rizzardi made the motion to approve for discussion the request to host for the South Central & Alabama Motorcoach Assn, 2010 joint convention and marketplace in the amount of \$31,000. Seconded for discussion by Commission Ponthieux, the Commission discussed this item and needs more detail since it will be held at a casino property and not at the coliseum. Crystal will report back to the Commission at a later date.

The Commission reviewed the Convention Incentive Program Guidelines submitted by the sales department. More information is needed before approval from Commission.

Legal Counsel Report – None

HCTC Reports

Commissioner Daniels reported on the Office Relocation Task Force meeting held Friday, March 6<sup>th</sup>

Reviewed proposed layout of new office space at the Convention Center, will meet again to go over revision and color chart.

Commissioner Daniels reported on the Advertising Committee meeting held Tuesday, March 10<sup>th</sup> as information only.

- A. Discussed logos decided with Commission approval on the footprints in the sand logo.
- B. TV buy
- C. Media advertising plan for the rest of fy 2009.
- D. Hurricane action plan being repaired by the agency.
- E. Received update on Mardi Gras fam

Commissioner Daniels made the motion to accept the report from the Advertising Committee meeting held March 10, 2009. Seconded by Commissioner Ponthieux, the president called the question with the following results:

|                        |             |        |
|------------------------|-------------|--------|
| Commissioner Allen     | Voted ----- | Absent |
| Commissioner Creel     | Voted ----- | Absent |
| Commissioner Daniels   | Voted ----- | Yes    |
| Commissioner Guice     | Voted ----- | Absent |
| Commissioner Montana   | Voted ----- | Absent |
| Commissioner Rizzardi  | Voted ----- | Yes    |
| Commissioner Ponthieux | Voted ----- | Yes    |
| Commissioner Van Stone | Voted ----- | Yes    |

The motion having been duly made, seconded, and a favorable vote received from the Commission, the president declared the motion adopted March 24, 2009.

Crystal Johnson, director,  
Sales

**Convention Sales:**

***Booked Business:***

*Feb 2009: 5 pieces of booked business representing 1,139 attendees and 3,230 room nights*

- ☆ Conference Planning International – Department of Veteran's Affairs – March 16 – 19, 2009 15 ppl./48 rn*
- ☆ National Association of County Veterans Service Officers – June 4 – 10, 2011 500 ppl./1650 rn*
- ☆ Planner Resources, Inc. – 2010 VPPPA – Health & Safety Conference – June 20 – 26, 2010 550 ppl / 1466 rn*
- ☆ Southeastern Shrine Association – Officers Retreat – MidWinter Meeting – March 3 – 5, 2009 30 ppl/30 rn*
- ☆ Walker-Acosta Family Reunion – June 12 – 14, 2009 – 44 ppl. / 36 rn*

***Sales Leads:***

*Feb 2009: 4 leads representing 395 attendees and 733 room nights*

***Lost Business:***

*Feb 2009: 7 leads representing 8,430 attendees and 10,961 room nights*

- ☆ American Philatelic Society – 2011 APS AmeriStamp Expo – February 2011 2500 attendees / 1000 room nights  
REASON: Needs hotel next to convention center*
- ☆ Barbershop Harmony Society – 2010 MidWinter Meeting – January 2010 800 attendees / 1680 room nights  
REASON: Rate issues*
- ☆ Independent Softball Association – 2009 ISA/SSUSA National Convention – 200 attendees / 635 room nights  
REASON: Board vote – selected Nashville*
- ☆ National Agricultural Aviation Association – 2010 Annual Convention – December 2010 – 1600 attendees / 1725 room nights  
REASON: They are too worried about the potential for hurricane damage and would have to relocate the convention.*
- ☆ Resort Meetings Consortium – DaVita – Divisional Meetings – 130 attendees / 140 room nights  
REASON: Group selected Orlando, FL*
- ☆ Southeast Stormwater Association – SESWA 2009 Annual Fall Conference – October 2009 200 attendees / 200 room nights  
REASON: Decided to wait because of budget cuts but will host meeting on the MS Gulf Coast until 2010 – group will meet at Beau Rivage in 2010.*
- ☆ National Rural Letter Carriers Association – 2014 Annual Convention – August 2014 – 3000 attendees / 5581 room nights  
REASON: Narrowed selection down to Houston, TX and Grapevine, TX where they could be under one roof in either location.*

***Client Meetings: February 6, 2009***

*Mosquito 6147 Tactical Control Group  
Tony Pascale  
May 2010 Annual Reunion / 120 attendees / 385 room nights*

***February 18, 2009***

*Gulf Coast Food & Fuel Expo  
Arleen Alexander & Lauren Hodge  
February 2009 / 300 attendees / 685 room nights*

***Travel:***

***February 7 – 9, 2009***

*Meeting Professionals International  
MeetDifferent  
Atlanta, GA  
\*See attached tradeshow report*

***February 20 – 21, 2009***

*National Governors Association (attendance builder for 2009 Annual Convention)  
Mid-Winter Meeting  
Washington, DC*

***February 25 – 26, 2009***

*Destinations Showcase DC  
Washington, DC  
\*See attached tradeshow report*

**Convention Services:**

| Group Name                          | Dates:                 | Location:                             | Registration | Goodies:   | Total Spent:     | Room Nights Picked Up: |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------|--|------------------|------------------------|
| Second Liners Mardi Gras Ball       | February 8, 2009       | IP Casino Resort & Spa                | 4 ppl.       | Badges, holders, pens, & brochures                       | \$559.00         | 21                     |
| MS Postal Workers Union             | February 8 – 11, 2009  | IP Casino Resort & Spa                | 4 ppl.       | Badges, holders, pens, brochures, lapel pins, & notepads | \$436.00         | 679                    |
| Biloxi Wholesale Gift Show          | February 7 – 9, 2009   | MS Coast Coliseum & Convention Center | 2 ppl.       | Badges, holders & brochures                              | \$1335.00        | Multiple hotels        |
| International Ministers Wives Conf. | February 20 – 21, 2009 | Courtyard by Marriott                 |              | Brochures, bags, pens                                    | \$120.00         | 180                    |
| National Blueberry Council          | February 24, 2009      | Courtyard by Marriott                 |              | Brochures, bags, pens, notepads                          | \$81.00          | 83                     |
| Council of Exceptional Children     | February 18 – 20, 2009 | Beau Rivage                           |              | Brochures, bags, pens, notepads                          | \$162.00         | 200                    |
| <b>Total</b>                        |                        |                                       |              |  | <b>\$2693.00</b> | <b>1163</b>            |

**Leisure Travel:**

**Definite Tours:**

*Feb. 2009: 2 tours for 459 attendees and 459 room nights*

*★ FIT PROGRAM: Tourico Holiday Flights / Travel Holdings, Inc. – August 2008 – December 2008 387 room nights*

*★ SavyTravelers.com – August 2009 – 45 attendees / 72 room nights*

**Tentative Generated:**

*Feb. 2009: 2 leads representing 90 attendees and 155 room nights*

*★ JR Fun Tours – Knoxville, TN – July 2009 – 50 attendees / 75 room nights*

*★ Mary Nickerson – Group Leader – Mebane NC Travel Club – July 2009 – 40 attendees / 80 room nights*

**Site Visits:**

February 19, 2009

Marjorie Cook – State of MS Representative from Canada

February 11 – 12, 2009

Group Travel Leader Magazine

Eliza Tychonievich

**Travel:**

February 2 – 3, 2009

North American Journeys West

Los Angeles, CA

*\*See attached tradeshow report*

February 9 – 11, 2009

Receptive Services Association of America (RSAA)

New York, NY

*\*See attached tradeshow report*

February 15 – 17, 2009

MTA Governors Conference on Tourism

Hattiesburg, MS

*\*See attached trip report (educational)*

**Department-Wide**

**Meetings:**

February 3, 2009: ACAE Lunch & Learn – Montgomery, AL

February 10, 2009: HSMIAI Gulf South Chapter Meeting – Villas at Legacy Condominiums

February 23, 2009: Assisted with Mardi Gras Fam transportation for Tim Baines

February 24, 2009: Mardi Gras Float

Nicole Learson, director, Marketing

Marketing Report – Feb 2009

- Executed successful Mardi Gras FAM
- Created final draft for marketing department productivity measurements
- Finished work on Calendar of Events on website and for February printing

- Added 24 new coupons to website and renewed 12 that were expiring at the end of October; 1 coupon was not renewed
- Edited & worked on updating tourism part of Harrison County Employee Directory
- Updated website listings and added new businesses and restaurants
- Mailed 166 inquiry packets as a result of email and phone requests, including 2 from Canada, 1 from Germany and 1 from Spain; 102 assists with hotel accommodations

#### Advertising

- Worked with ad agency on 2009 media schedule
- Ads Produced: 2009 ACAE directory ad (March), America's Best Vacations-Red Plum Section (March)

#### Media Relations

- Monitored Google Alerts
- Rayanne Weiss, WLOX Editorial, submitted a tourism editorial
- Dan Shepherd, Buffalo Communications/Billy Casper Golf, b-roll request to be included at the DC Metro Golf Show
- Mike Barker, Sports Destination Management, requested a 1,200 word general destination piece about the Mississippi Gulf Coast with 5 or 6 images
- David MacArthur, Clifton's Edge LLC, requested b-roll footage to be used in a video to produce as an attendance builder for a conference coming to the Beau Rivage in 2010.
- David Herring, WUSJ WJKK WYOY WIIN, Ridgland MS, Requested information on Coastal Mardi Gras Events, Biloxi Lighthouse, Beaches, Mississippi Sea Wolves, Sandhill Cranes, Horseback Riding, Parks, Zoos, Nature Settings for a February 9-10 visit. We collected the information and sent with press kit.

#### Media Relations

- Jay Boehmer, Business Travel News, including the Mississippi Gulf Coast in an article about hotel sales tax.

The following media site visits were held in the February:

- Peter Blais, Boomer Golf News, dinner @ Mary Mahoney's February 3
- Mike Hiller on assignment for the Dallas Morning News/Avid Golfer February 10-13
  - o DMN Circulation 338,933 / AvidGolfer Circulation 50,000
- Eliza Tychonievich, Group Travel Leader Magazine, February 11-12
  - o Circulation 30,007
- David MacArthur, Clifton's Edge LLC, visiting coast February 12-13 to video tape an attendance builder for conference - interviewed Richard Forester at Beauvoir
- Mardi Gras FAM - total circulation of all publications 3,187,201

The following were results of media contact:

- LaRaye Brown. Clarion Ledger, Miss. Gaming suffers with economy, Richard and Beverly quoted - January 7, 2009
- Alistair Wearmouth, Away.com, posted images of Gulfport/Biloxi on web site.
- Hometown Tour: Mississippi Gulf Coast resulted from WKRG TV5 advertising
- Peter Finch, Golf Digest Gulf Station, three page story, March 09 issue -6 million readers per issue

#### Reminders

1. Smokin' the Sound – March 26 – 29, 2009
2. Smokin' the Lake – April 3 – 5, 2009
3. Marketing Assistance Grant Seminar – April 1<sup>st</sup> – 2:30pm – Knight Nonprofit Center downstairs meeting room
4. Executive Committee meeting – Thursday, April 9<sup>th</sup> @ 1:30pm – Commissioners Martin; Montana; Daniels; Allen
5. HCTC meeting – Tuesday, April 14<sup>th</sup> @ 1:30 pm

#### Staff travel

1. STS Spring meeting – March 23<sup>rd</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> – Montgomery, AL – Forester & Learson
2. HSMIA Chicago – March 30 – April 3, 2009 – Gary Benson
3. Travel South – Kissimmee, FL - April 4 – 8, 2009 – Forester, Rand

Executive Session – None

Commissioner Ponthieux moved that the meeting be adjourned. Seconded by Commissioner Daniels, the president called the question, with the following results:

|                        |             |        |
|------------------------|-------------|--------|
| Commissioner Allen     | Voted ----- | Absent |
| Commissioner Creel     | Voted ----- | Absent |
| Commissioner Daniels   | Voted ----- | Yes    |
| Commissioner Guice     | Voted ----- | Absent |
| Commissioner Montana   | Voted ----- | Absent |
| Commissioner Rizzardi  | Voted ----- | Yes    |
| Commissioner Ponthieux | Voted ----- | Yes    |
| Commissioner Van Stone | Voted ----- | Yes    |

The motion having been duly made, seconded, and a favorable vote received from the Commission, the president declared the motion adopted March 24, 2009.