

**St. John the Baptist Parish
Economic Development Committee**
Minutes of Regular Meeting
Monday, July 9, 2018

ATTENDANCE:

Present:

Michelle Jenkins
Kim Fontenot
James Oubre, Jr.
Robert Taylor
Tyler Lewis
Peggy Joseph

Staff:

Jerry Jones
Denise Burrell
Amanda Martin

Guest:

Lawrence Lawes
Wayne Aucoin
Mala Taylor
Jo Banner
Steven J. Louque, II
Buddy Boe
Yasmaine Magee
Pamela B.Allen
Lester Mitchell
Lois Frank
Kaneedra Fultz
Dayna James
Marchelle Washington
Pat Comiskey
Chassity McComack
Penelope Shumaker
Ryan Warren
Rachel B. Burns
Shaun Adams
Rhonda Clark
Derron Cook
Crystal
Sylvia Clayton
Linda Prudhomme
Councilman Sorapuru

Absent:

Evin Stein
Elizabeth Joseph
Kali J. Price

Call to Order

Chairwoman Michelle Jenkins called meeting to order at 12:05 p.m.

Roll Call

Seven (6) Committee members were present. Three (3) Absent - Quorum was met.

Opening Prayer / Pledge of Allegiance

Michelle Jenkins led prayer. James Oubre Jr. led Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comments (3) Minutes – There was lengthy discussion in reference tourism and business opportunities missed during the weekend of Essence Festival 2018.

- Dayna James shared what her business, United Front Transportation, experienced the weekend of Essence Festival 2018.
- Mr. Patel, owner of the Q hotels, allowed Mrs. James to setup in the Best Western Hotel lobby to shuttle for their guests going to and from the Essence Festival (Thurs – Sunday).
- Mrs. James shared that the hotels were sold out for the weekend and the money did not reach the Airline. Her team noticed the missed opportunity of St. John Parish businesses to capitalize on the visiting and lodging tourists' needs of food, entertainment, and tours. She noted the majority of the restaurants were closed on Sunday. She was able to refer and shuttle the guests to Frenier Landing and Min Hui Mart to get crawfish. She stated, "We have to do better. We sat there and just watched all that money trickle from St. John."
- Jerry Jones asked, "What times did you find they wanted to go to lunch?"
 - Dayna: "It was after hours after the festival around 5pm dinnertime and some after picking up from festival. If the restaurants knew they had this overflow from New Orleans, I'm pretty sure they would open up."
- Mrs. James believes that we need to have someone (Parish, Chamber of Commerce, Tourism) representing in the hotels to pass on the information and greet the guests on special event weekends (Dayna James - Fraternity Convention July 20-22, Peggy Joseph - Mardi Gras, Kim Fontenot - Bayou Classic, Jo Banner – Bayou Country Super Fest). "...We have to get a team together to do better. We need to come together now and prepare for next year. People say we have an economic development problem; no, we don't we have a connection problem."
- Mrs. James – stated we need to have a directory to present. Mr. Jones informed that we do have one (River Region Chamber of Commerce Directory) and the catalog is/has been passed out. Mrs. James added she has one.
- Mr. Jones: "It's not the question if the people who live here are informed but the people who do not live here. Information can only be place in the lobby area of the hotels not in the rooms."

- Ms. Crystal – respects Mrs. James’ passion and is in support of the Board. The booking launching that took place two years ago and changed Essence and we do not have locals representing anymore. There is more demand than supply. The people will tour on the busses but they want to be downtown. We cannot force or bully businesses to stay open. Be careful with our words and just inform them.
- Jo Banner, Tourist Commission shared, Joy Banner, Whitney Plantation ran out of their flyers; it was obvious the people wanted to come out and visit. Queen Sugar sitcom and the movie “Girls’ Trip” which featured New Orleans and the Essence Festival increased their numbers this year. The pop-up restaurants tents made it easier for the business. Agrees the Tourist Commission needs to do a better job of attracting people to Essence.
- Jerry Jones shared business to not fill out small business loans to invest in their business for advertising and the need for restaurants to be a part of a restaurant association. Also that Councilman Perrilloux asked him “Why don’t you see local businesses on the I-10 exit and on-ramps. The department has sent out the information to businesses via constant contact. Connection is the problem.
- Suggestions:
 - We need to have that conversation and come together upcoming events
 - Prudhomme – United Front Transportation should go to RPTC meeting
 - Fontenot: We can send the information to businesses prior to events
 - P. Joseph: A representative to setup at the hotels and distribute coupons
 - Jones: Bayou Classic Sunday (November) is bumper to bumper traffic on the interstate. Advertise to get off in St. John because you will be in traffic. Joseph share on that Friday as well.
 - Pruhomme: you can do it through radio announcement while travelers are sitting in traffic.
 - Jones: to create a task force and will send out a time when all can meet to include the business community, EDC, transportation, hotels, tourism.

Adoption of Minutes from April 2, 2018, May 7, 2018, & June 4, 2018 Meeting

Motion from Tyler Lewis and seconded by Robert Taylor to adopt the April 2nd, May 7th and June 4th meeting minutes. The motion passed with 6 yeas and 3 against (Evin Stein, Elizabeth Joseph, & Kali J. Price)

Director’s Report – Jerry Jones (see report)

Old Business – No Old Business

New Business

- **Business Talk**
 - Steven Louque, owner - Mr. Block’s Computer Repair – in business since 2006.
 - Expanded business to include infrastructure
 - Able to go out and work on networks bigger than home networks.
 - Quite difficult to provide to bigger companies being a one man show.
 - Getting more involved in the community and parish operations.
 - Pat Comiskey – 35 years published Tri-Parish Phone Directory
 - Representing A. G. Crowe, former State Senator, and development of a project in other communities. Produces a virtual map of the Parish. List businesses, hotels, motels, restaurants, events (tourism) with link to website.
 - Corporate sponsors are Tri-Parish along with the Port of South Louisiana. Still looking for other sponsors. www.shoplocalusa.online
- **Economic Development Budget** - Tabled

Community Partners’ Update

- **Energry Louisiana** – Ana Gale-Orellana - Absent
- **Louisiana Small Business Development Center** – Wayne Aucoin
 - Lunch and Learn
 - Lunch and Learn Series: Human Resources for Entrepreneurs

- August 8, 15, 22, 2018
 - 12:00- 3:00
 - Session 1: Recruiting, Hiring, and Onboarding the Right People
 - Session 2: Influencing, Developing, and Retaining Your Employees
 - Session 3: Performance Management and Termination
 - SEBD Certification Workshops
 - Certification for the FastTrac Program – August 30, 2018
 - Speaker – Wayne Aucoin
 - Round Table Forum
 - *"Understanding Financial Statements" From the Owner's Perspective*
 - July 11, 2018 and July 20, 2018
 - Facilitator – Richard Melancon
 - QuickBooks Class
 - July 18, 2018
 - FastTrac Program
 - Next class begins September 13 ,2018
- **Port of South Louisiana - Linda Prudhomme**
 - The Port of South Louisiana is working with the State of Louisiana to secure funding for our Capital Projects in the amount of \$41,000,000. The port will be securing funds for projects such a rail storage facility, new Port administration building, up-grades to an existing industrial warehouse building, strengthen our Globalplex Dock, and purchase 2-new cranes. We expect these projects will be ongoing over the next 36 months based on funding provided by the State.
 - The port continues to promote the river region to potential industrial prospects by working with the local economic development director(s) (Jerry Jones EDC) to educate these prospects about available sites for sale or lease for new industrial development.
- **River Parish Tourist Commission (RPTC) – Buddy Boe**
 - Operations
 - 2018/2019 Budget
 - Office Move
 - Tax Collections
 - New Vice Chairman elected
 - Community Engagement
 - Historic Districts/Main Streets
 - Advertising & PR
 - Re-Brand Launch - August
 - Visitor Guide/Website
 - Press FAM – July 10-13
 - St. John Center / Film Office
 - Regional Cooperation on Films
 - Sales/Business Development
 - 2019 & 2020 LSAE Convention
 - Group Travel FAM – July 26-28
 - Schedule
 - STS Congressional Summit – July 17/18, DC
 - SYTA – Aug 9-13, Baltimore
 - LTA Summit – Aug 21-23, Lake Charles
- **River Region Chamber of Commerce - Chassity McComack**
 - Organizational:
 - New member engagement coordinator will be planning visits to members in the region, as well as utilizing new business listings to visit prospective members.
 - Workforce Development
 - High School surveys are completed. More info will come once the reporting is finalized. We are close to the ground game. WF mtgs held every 3rd Tuesday, 9 am at the RPCC-Reserve campus. Shell Chemical recently committed as an investor.
 - Business Development
 - Small business roundtable: Understanding your Financials – from the Owner's perspective will be hosted on July 10 and 20th, 9:30 am – 11:30 am at the Chamber office. Register at 985-359-9777. Seating is limited.

- Networking
 - Chamber Connections Lunch was June 20th held at St. James Hospital Community Room. 20 attendees. Next session will be held in St. Charles parish.
- Leadership River Region
 - Application process for the next class session is now open. Online application is available on the chamber website, "Leadership River Region" page. Great opportunity to develop future leaders within your business. Deadline to register is July 15, 2018.
- The Chamber is once again providing welcome bags to "new teachers" in the River Region. Businesses interested can bring items to the chamber office between 9 am and 2 pm Mon – Thursday or 8 am – 11 am on Friday. Deadline is July 10, 2018.
- **River Parishes Community College (RPCC) Reserve Campus** – Penelope Shumaker
 - Penny Shumaker title has changed from Campus Dean to Campus Director
 - The realignment is complete; we are a full-fledged community college
 - Classes started at the beginning of the summer
 - St. John has 25 plus students scheduled for dual enrollment to come on in the Fall
 - Taking on their overflow of the welding program as well
 - New Electrical Program that started in the summer is doing well.
 - Expecting a full class in the fall.
 - Building Updates:
 - The monies leftover from the new building ; a new parking lot will be added to the front of the building on Airline (bidding in progress) along with landscaping and changing the college's name on the monumental signage by Airline.
 - Welding program grant – the new building should be constructed by this Christmas. Expected start off the New Year in the welding building.
 - A bond commission is going to give the College \$175,000 for repairs to the main campus.
 - Public service Commission – the College applied for a grant in October 2017 specifically for lighting and air conditioning. They started awarding the grants district by district. The grant will allow the change every single lighting fixture in the building.
 - Geared up for fall and a lot of students coming for the transfer degree.
- **South Central Planning and Development Commission** – Cullen Curole – Absent
- **St. John Business Association** – Absent
- **St. John Community Center & Soundstage** – Jo Banner
 - Center Inquiries (4)
 - Inquiry from Pastor Ford regarding community event in February 2019
 - Inquiry from Food Network to use Center Mid-August – Mid September
 - Inquiry to use Atrium for graduation party
 - Inquiry to use Room B for Party on September 1
 - Events Held (4)
 - Foe Paw Production is using facility until July 2018.
 - 90th Birthday Party – Room A on June 30th, 2018
 - Baby Shower in Atrium- July 1, 2018
 - Graduation Party in Atrium – July 14th, 2018
 - Events Booked (10)
 - Foe Paw Production from 4/23/2018-7/6/2018
 - 90th Birthday Party on 6/29/2018 (Production will make room available)
 - Baby Shower – 7/1/2018
 - Graduation Party – 7/14/2018
 - Parish Meeting – 7/25/2018
 - Wedding Reception on 8/18/2018
 - Wedding Reception and Ceremony on 11/13/2018
 - Wedding Reception on 11/22/2018
 - Wedding Reception on 12/29/2018
 - Krewe du Monde submitted down payment for 2019 Mardi Gras Ball
 - Location Request/Scouting (2)
 - Small production looking for church
 - Production looking for barn
 - Ad Placement (3)
 - Oz Entertainment Directory
 - L'Observateur Magazine – Ad for St. John Center
 - Tri-Parish Directory Book and online edition

- **St. John the Baptist Parish School Board** - Absent
- **River Parishes Workforce Development**– Lawrence Lawes
 - Small Business Support
 - Increased Outreach
 - Recruiting Support continues to be strong
 - Providing pre-screening services
 - Helping to develop more effective job descriptions
 - Job Seeker Support
 - LaPlace Office very busy at new location
 - Qualitative and Quantitative increase in services
 - Increased appropriate referral to LRS and Mental Health
 - Re-entry/ Return to Work services qualitative & quantitative increases
 - Local businesses are being very supportive
 - Senior Community Services Employment Program
 - Active involvement with increased referrals
 - Seeking local organizations to sign on for OJT placements
 - We are following up with SCSEP for placement rates
 - C-TECH presentation to RPWB to stimulate ways Cabling Technology Training can develop our local workforce to include high schools, community college, jails / prisons and probation / parole services.

Announcements

- 2018 Andouille Festival Food and Arts & Crafts Vendor applications are available now at the front desk or online. The deadline is August 1, 2018.
- Goodwill Ribbon Cutting Ceremony – Thursday, August 2, 2018.
- Relay of Voices – Mississippi Run in October 2018. They will stop in all of the River Parishes.
- River Parishes Tourist Commission Board Meeting – Thursdays, July 11th at St. Charles Parish Council for 10:00am.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Tyler Lewis and seconded by James Oubre Jr. Meeting was adjourned at 1:45 pm.