



MINUTES FROM MMAA MEETING ON JUNE 15, 2010

Following are the minutes from the June Meeting of the Metro Memphis Attractions Association which was held on Tuesday, June 15, 2010 at Harrah's Casino Tunica at the Paula Deen Buffet. Thirty **(30)** members and guests were in attendance. If you have any questions or comments relating to this meeting and/or the information provided here, please contact a Board Member for assistance or clarification.

GUEST SPEAKER COMMENTS

Pam Hetsel introduced Sandy Bynum, Bureau Manager for the Mississippi Tourism Communication & Advertising Bureau, who spoke on "Working with Our Neighbors to Promote Tourism North and South of the State Line".

Sandy welcomed the group to Mississippi and extended greetings from Mary Beth Wilkerson at the bureau. (Technical difficulties did not allow for the use of PowerPoint and videos, but these are available if you would like to contact Sandy).

Sandy gave a brief overview on how the bureau operates and explained that the Mississippi Division of Tourism is made up of a sales bureau that offers outdoor ads, meetings and conventions, group tours, sports markets and international marketing (with the Memphis CVB). "Many times I will joke that Memphis and New Orleans are two of Mississippi's largest cities," Sandy said. Administrative and Research staff maintain stats that help provide the knowledge of where to market.

She said a lot of great things are happening in Mississippi, including the Blues music trail and the country music trail. Mississippi proudly owns the title of "The Birthplace of American Music", as it is where artists such as Elvis Presley and B.B. King were born. She noted that these are great ways to showcase Mississippi and also connect with Memphis. "We are truly all connected." Sandy said. "Many times here in the Delta, visitors will travel without knowing which county they are in since we share so many similarities. There are opportunities for everyone."

Mississippi just installed its first Country Music Trail marker in Meridian, the next will be in Philadelphia. There are 30 trail markers for country music and about 120 trail markers for the blues. Mississippi and the Delta bring the true and authentic experience that the younger generations are looking for. They've already done the flashy Disney trips. They want something authentic. We've become culturally cool without trying.

Sandy's department handles advertising and communications which targets the consumer market, and the revenue generated contributes to the general fund for the state of Mississippi. "People are beginning to see the value of tourism in economic development," she said. Their advertising budget is small, but things like social media are growing every day. It's a great way to extend a budget into areas you haven't been before.

Sandy shared some examples of their marketing materials, including Media kits which are produced digitally and loaded on a flash drive (in the shape of Mississippi) and given to media interested in information about the state. They also offer a map, an outdoor adventure guide, the MS Tour guide and a food and culture guide.

She noted that Mississippi has been facing some challenges recently, such as flooding, the Gulf oil spill, etc., which affect us all, but the great thing about the South and the hospitality industry is that we are resilient, adaptable and accommodating. Mississippi has also had the opportunity to be on the national stage by hosting events like the Grammys, which Vanity Fair called "One of the 10 best parties in the world."

Go to www.visitmississippi.org where you'll find photographs, as well as online radio that is listened to in 44 different countries. There is a new photo library at www.seemiss.com, rights are free and usable to the public.

Sandy encouraged everyone to send their materials to the Mississippi Welcome Centers, which receive more than 2 million visitors a year, and is a great way to reach Mississippi visitors. She thanked everyone for the opportunity to speak, and she wants everyone to feel free to contact her for materials and information.

HOST COMMENTS

Taffy Ashley from Harrah's welcomed the group to the property and noted that the Tunica Resorts are made up of Harrah's, Horseshoe, and Tunica Roadhouse. Upcoming events include appearances by Brian McKnight and Bill Cosby. They are very excited about the opening of Toby Keith's "I Love This Bar & Grill" – coming soon.

MMAA PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS & ASSOCIATION BUSINESS

Pam Hetsel led the meeting in Sheri's absence and encouraged everyone to contact Sheri with association announcements and questions.

ASSOCIATION REPORTS

None

BRAG JAR

Michael Todd, Incredible Pizza Company - their "scratch and win" cards are available at attractions and hotels. Contact him if you would like some at your property.

Pam Hetsel, Memphis Rock'n'Soul Museum – In conjunction with the Blues Trail markers Sandy referred to in MS, Pam noted that there is a blues marker right in front of the Rock & Soul Museum.

Chris Roan, Memphis CVB – Reminding everyone about the MCVB Annual Meeting and Summer Mixer on June 23rd at the Zoo in Teton Trek.

DOOR PRIZES

Thank you to the organizations who donated the following door prizes:
Tickets to the Orpheum

**** REMINDER – WE DO NOT HAVE A MEETING IN JULY! The next meeting will be on Tuesday, August 17th at AutoZone Park. Southern Heritage Classic will be the Spotlight Member.**

Hope everyone has a safe & wonderful summer holiday and we look forward to seeing you all in August!