

December 19, 2011

**TO: Members of the Columbus-Convention**

**And Visitors Bureau**

**FR: Alliance of Festival Organizers**

On December 6, 2011, Festival Organizers met to discuss the funding policies adopted by the Columbus-Lowndes County Convention and Visitors Bureau. The following individuals were present:

Supervisor Leroy Brooks

Juneteenth Festival

Mayor Robert Smith

Legend's Concert

Councilman Gene Taylor

Southside-Townsend Blues Festival

**Supervisor Jeff Smith**

**Southside-Townsend Blues Festival**

**Pastor Tony Montgomery**

**Dream 365 MLK**

**Learnardr Dickerson**

**Dream 365 MLK**

**Mayor Jimmy Sanders**

**Artesia Day**

**Mayor Fred Tolon**

**Crawford Day**

**Councilman Kabir Karriem**

**7<sup>th</sup> Avenue Heritage Festival**

**Greg Lewis**

**Unity Luncheon**

Opinion from  
the Alliance  
of Festival  
Organizers

**Request:** Funding for Entertainment be an eligible expenditure

**Justification:** Funds received from the Columbus-Lowndes County Convention and Visitors Bureau has always been used to help defray the cost of entertainment for festivals. Credible entertainment is one of the most important aspects of festivals. The escalating cost of attracting viable entertainment makes it impossible to sponsor a festival without the resources from the CVB.

**Request:** Advertisement and Promotions be decided by the sponsors of the festival, rather than a required amount set by the CVB. However, a portion of the funding would be used for the aforementioned purposes.

**Justification:** Each organization has developed a marketing plan for their festival event. Primarily, advertisement and promotions include television, radio, newspaper, posters and handout cards. The printed material is distributed throughout Mississippi, as well as in Alabama and some areas in Tennessee. Radio advertisement not only includes local stations, but stations that reach the Birmingham, Memphis and Jackson markets. Some of the festivals are included in major magazines and other sources of advertisement and promotion material from various agencies and organization.

**Request:** Festival should be allocated a fair apportionment of funds received by the Columbus-Convention and Visitors Bureau. Organizations are requesting funds be provided for the festival based on the chart below for 2012 and 2013. Funding should not fall below this level unless an organization failed to adhere to the guidelines and a failure to submit an accurate report.

	<u>2011</u>	2012 -2013	
Artesia Day:	\$8,000.00	\$8,000.00	
Crawford Cotton Boll	\$4000.00	\$6,000.00	+\$2000.00
MLK Dream 365	\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00	
Juneteenth Festival	\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00	-\$1000
7th Avenue Heritage Festival	\$14,500.00	\$15,000.00	\$500.00 increase
Southside-Townsend Blues Festival	\$12,000.00	\$14,000.00	\$2,000.00 increase

**Recommend the Catfish Alley event be cancelled and those funds reallocated to make the necessary adjustments for the festivals.**

**Justification:** The Columbus-Lowndes County Convention and Visitors Bureau allocated \$69,500.00 to the aforementioned festivals in 2011, representing approximately 5% of the total budget of the CVB. These festivals attract thousands of participants with approximately 25% of

the participants being from outside the county and state area. At least 100 vendors participate in the festival activities. These vendors purchase their food and other commodities from local stores. Vendors from outside of Mississippi normally stay in local hotels. Food and other items sold at the festivals generate sales taxes which are collected by the sponsors and turned into the Department of Revenue. Even more important, is the ability for festival organizers to plan long term with a set budget from the CVB. When entertainers are booked early, their rates are more negotiable.

**Request:** Festival Sponsors be required to report their total festival cost. The final project report should require receipts and checks for only the funds allocated by the CVB to organizations.

Justification Festival sponsors believe such action would simplify the project clearance report. Furthermore, there is no justification for the CVB to require receipts and other documents for activities they did not fund.

The Alliance of Festival Organizer feels these requests are reasonable and should be adopted immediately. The failure to consider these request will results in all festivals being withdrawn from participation with the Columbus-Lowndes County Convention and Visitors Bureau. A request will be made to the Mayor and City Council to consider dissolution of the Agency for unfair actions and blatant bias toward certain activities in our community.