

Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board

Wednesday December 17, 2014; 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Coltivare, 235 S. Cayuga St, Ithaca

Reception to Follow 5:00 – 5:45 pm

AGENDA	Start Time
1) October STPB Meeting Minutes	3:00
• ACTION – Approve Meeting Minutes	
2) Privilege of the Floor	
• Limit of 3 minutes per person for members of the public to address the board)	
3) Chair’s REPORT – Rick Adie	3:05
4) Staff REPORT – Tom Knipe	3:10
5) CVB REPORT - Bruce Stoff	3:15
6) Membership and Bylaws Committee – Lynnette Scofield	3:25
• ACTION – Recommend appointment of new STPB members	
7) Finger Lakes Wine Center REPORT and DISCUSSION – Christy Agnese	3:35
8) Ticket Center Ithaca REPORT and DISCUSSION – John Spence	
9) Planning & Evaluation Committee REPORT – Ken Jupiter	4:05
• Proposed CVB Policy changes and update on Evaluation Plan	
10) Airbnb legislative resolution REPORT – Will Burbank	4:30
11) Community Celebrations Grant Review Committee.	4:40
• ACTION – approve proposed modifications to the grant guidelines, evaluation criteria and application process. Current guidelines available: www.tompkinscountyny.gov/tourism/celebrations	
12) Nominating Committee REPORT – Anne Kellerman	4:50
13) Ag & Culinary Tourism Task Force update – Rita Rosenberg Barber, Ethan Ash	4:55
Presentation slides available online: http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/files/tourism/docs/Ag-Culinary-2014Workshop-FINAL-LoRes.pdf	

Agenda Packet

1. October 2014 draft STPB meeting minutes
2. “Understanding the Failure of the Finger Lakes Wine Center” Report
3. “Understanding the Closure of the Ticket Center” Report
4. STPB Planning & Evaluation Committee 11/20/14 meeting notes
5. Draft Resolution and memo: “Requesting state study and response on online property rental platforms”
6. CVB December Report

Next Meeting

Wednesday, January 21, 2015



MISSION:

The Strategic Tourism Planning Board is charged by the Tompkins County Legislature with providing oversight and strategic direction for tourism initiatives that *promote economic development* and *enhance the quality of life* in Tompkins County.

**Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB)
Meeting Minutes Draft – October 2014**

1 **Date:** October 15, 2014
 2 **Time:** 3:00-5:00pm
 3 **Location:** Chamber of Commerce
 4
 5

Attendees:

Name	✓	Representation
Anne Kellerman	A	At-Large
Ian Golden	✓	Recreation
Ethan Ash	✓	Arts-Culture
John Gutenberger	E	Cornell
Lynette Scofield	✓	Lodging
Rick Adie	✓	Lodging
Rita Rosenberg	✓	Agriculture
Andy Zepp	E	At-Large
Stephen Nunley	✓	At-Large
Steve Hugo	E	At-Large
Ken Jupiter	✓	At-Large
Mike Mellor	✓	At-Large
Anne Gossen	✓	At-Large
Sue Stafford	✓	TC3
Christy Agnese	✓	At-Large

Name	✓	Representation
Sue Perlgut	✓	Arts-Culture
Susie Monagan	✓	Arts-Culture
John Spence	✓	CAP, Non-Voting
Bruce Stoff	✓	CVB, Non-Voting
Dwight Mengel	✓	Transportation, Non-Voting
Gary Ferguson	✓	DIA, Non-Voting
Jennifer Tavares	✓	Chamber, Non-Voting
Martha Armstrong	A	TCAD, Non-Voting
Will Burbank	✓	TC Legislature, Non-Voting
Beverly Baker	A	Associate Member
Carol Kammen	A	Associate Member
Jon Reis	✓	Associate Member
Tom Knipe	✓	Staff
Jennifer Turner	✓	Staff

7
8

9
 10 **Also in attendance:** Gavin Landry, Executive Director, NYS Division of Tourism, Carol Eaton, Chair of
 11 Finger Lakes Regional Tourism Council, Nicole Mahoney, Director of the Finger Lakes Regional Tourism
 12 Council
 13

14 **Meeting Agenda**

15 Special Presentation – Gavin Landry
 16 Special Presentation – Finger Lakes Region Association of TPA's
 17 July STPB Meeting Minutes
 18 Privilege of the Floor
 19 Fall 2014 Tourism Grant Recommendations:

- 20 • ACTION – Recommend Fall 2014 Community Celebrations Grant awards – Carol Kammen
- 21 • ACTION – Recommend 2014 Budget Adjustment from Marketing and Advertising Grants to New
 22 Tourism Initiative Grants in the amount of 12,000 – Tom Knipe
- 23 • ACTION – Recommend Fall 2014 Tourism Marketing and Advertising Grant awards – Ethan Ash
- 24 • ACTION – Recommend Fall 2014 New Tourism Initiative Grant awards – Ann Gossen

25 Report – Update on Grant Program Review
 26 Chair's Report – Rick Adie
 27 Staff Report – Tom Knipe
 28 CVB Report – Bruce Stoff
 29 ADJOURN
 30

31 **The meeting was called to order** at 3:07 PM.
 32

33 **September 2014 STPB meeting minutes** were approved with no changes.
 34

35 **Chair's Report** – Rick Adie reported that a Nominating Committee was appointed; Anne Kellerman will
 36 serve as Chair of the Committee. The next Nominating Committee meeting will take place the last week in
 37 October. The Strategic Tourism Planning Board, Tom Knipe, and Bruce Stoff will be presenting at the next
 38 Tompkins County Coalition of Governments meeting regarding AirBnB and their relation to tourism and will
 39 include a discussion on taxation regulations. Presentation of the three 2013 Tourism Partnership awards
 40 will take place in the month of November. Christy Agnese received praise on behalf of the STPB regarding
 41 the role she has played in documenting the deconstruction of the Wine Center; interviews of dozens of

Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB)
Meeting Minutes Draft – October 2014

42 people have been conducted. Rick noted the meeting he and Sue Perlcut were invited to by Phyllisa
43 DeSarno, the Deputy Director of Economic Development for the City of Ithaca, on the progress on the
44 construction of Hotel Ithaca. David Hart presented at the meeting; discussions covered the expansion plans
45 and the 4 million dollar gap in funding on the proposed expansion. Creative ways to fill the gap were
46 discussed as well as the question of use of the Tourism Capital Grants. More discussions will take place
47 regarding the guidelines of the use of Tourism Capital Grants.
48

49 **Special Presentation “I Love NY”** – Gavin Landry was introduced as the Executive Director of New York
50 State Division of Tourism. Members of the Strategic Tourism Planning Board introduced themselves.
51

52 Gavin Landry is a graduate of Cornell University’s School of Hotel Administration. He noted that the
53 difficulties that the brand “I Love NY”, has had since being launched in 1977-1978 as a way to help
54 Broadway find more business. With the “I Love NY” program being a state government funded program it
55 has been subject to the economy, politics, and war. Christine Nicholas, of New York City and Company,
56 recruited Gavin Landry while he was working as a hospitality consultant for numerous hotels.
57

58 With the tourism industry being reported as the 4th largest employer in the state with an estimated 900,000
59 jobs and the recognition and industry support, Gavin was able to organize a Tourism Summit. Increased
60 awareness of tourism throughout the state has been possible through the utilization of property of the
61 Metropolitan Transit Authority, Long Island Railroad and Port Authority. Components of the advertising
62 included the utilization of Real Estate that includes the installation of 3D element advertising of the T5
63 terminal at JetBlue at the JFK Airport which encouraged the utilization of trains. The T4 terminal features
64 Welcome to New York advertising in 11 different languages which covers about 90% of inbound travel. New
65 York City represents 60% of the total tourism spending in the State of New York.
66

67 By reaching out to the regional council and advertising representatives as well as state partners their group
68 was able to find out about upcoming events in New York State for 2014. 50 of the 350 events were selected
69 as major events for which activation would be provided. Some of the major activations included the Bass
70 Masters event, the Adirondack Challenge, and the Professional Golfers Association event in Rochester.
71 The Angler of the Year event was noted as a very successful event within the Finger Lakes.
72

73 International marketing has been a major priority of the New York State Division of Tourism. Efforts are
74 being made in working with overseas media, making New York State products available online and to travel
75 agents with the added benefit of training. Offices have opened in four cities in China and another office will
76 be opening in Australia. A Chinese media tour took place over the summer. China Southern, the third
77 largest airline in the world, visited New York and decided to establish a 4th non-stop flight from China.
78

79 STPB members asked about the focus on cultural tourism in New York State. The Winter Carnival and
80 Rochester Jazz Festival were noted. Mr. Landry mentioned New York State’s consolidated funding
81 application that is a streamline process that works with the 10 Regional Economic Development Councils.
82 He encouraged members to take advantage of funding that is available through the CFA. The focus on agri-
83 tourism was noted as priority of New York State; noted events included the yogurt summit and beer wine
84 and spirit summits. Taste of New York is the Governors initiative to encourage the purchase of all things
85 food and beverage created in New York State. He noted the farm to table movement an area it makes
86 sense to focus on. Dedicated funding and structure will be essential in making New York State Best in
87 Class as a state level tourism program. Landry suggested exploration of the idea of a car rental tax, which
88 has been used successfully as a source for tourism funding in other states.
89

90 **Finger Lakes Region Association of TPA’s** – Carol Eaton introduced herself as the Chair of the Board of
91 the Finger Lakes Regional Tourism Council. She noted the strength of the TPAs being due to the
92 collaboration of all 14 counties of the Finger Lakes region making up the Board. As of January 2014, the
93 board formed their own 501C3. She noted that their organization is not based on membership; all county
94 TPAs work on behalf of their own individual counties. The diversity of the events in the region can range
95 from championship games to wine tours. Their organization formed five years ago which at that time
96 contracted with Quinn; a public relations firm. Visiting journalists and hosting site visits were a long term
97 investment of time and resources that grew phenomenally. Break the Ice Media has since been brought in

**Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB)
Meeting Minutes Draft – October 2014**

98 to help with the overwhelming response in PR opportunities from coverage from both Quinn and the I Love
99 NY brand.

100
101 Nicole Mahoney of Break the Ice is contracted by the region but does interact on behalf of the Finger Lakes
102 as the regional director of the Finger Lakes. Some recent coverage secured by the Quinn PR program
103 included the Finger Lakes on the Today Show. The segment was given by the editor of Travel and Leisure
104 magazine and featured haunted hotels and spooky sites across the country. The Allegiance Bed and
105 Breakfast, Spook Hill and The New York State Haunted History Trail were all mentioned. There were four
106 million national viewers and immediate bookings within an hour of the segment. Upcoming features include
107 a story by Vogue magazine on the firelight camps at La Tourelle. I Love Fresh Air is a program funded
108 through the TPA's that is an outdoor campaign that has included the launch of a magazine, website and TV
109 campaign. A third round of funding through the TPA is pending. The Finger Lakes Regional Tourism
110 Council is registered for the New York Times Travel Show in January that will feature an I Love New York
111 Corridor with an adventure theme. The Scottsville Tourism Information Center is located in the Rochester
112 area. Future plans include a destination market analysis and strategic marketing plan.

113
114 **Fall 2014 Tourism Grants**

115
116 **Community Celebrations** – Sue Perlgut reported on the 2014 Community Celebrations grants on behalf of
117 Carol Kammen. Sue mentioned the two grant cycles that included new applications in the fall. These
118 requests included the Cayuga Heights Lecture Series, Civil War Nurses Monument, to be installed at TC3,
119 and the photo exhibit of types of manual labor the county is losing. Carol Kammen noted that the grants
120 leaned towards the arts and will lead to more interesting projects into the future. Motion to approve funding
121 for \$3,691 for Community Celebrations as outlined in the agenda packet by Sue Perlgut, seconded by
122 Christy Agnese, and approved unanimously.

123
124 **Budget Adjustment** – Tom Knipe reported that there \$65,000 in requests were made for the New Tourism
125 Initiative grants with \$36,500 in available funding. The Tourism Marketing and Advertising grant has a
126 recommendation to fully fund \$8,000 in requests with \$20,000 in available funding. Tom, working with
127 Committee Chairs suggested moving the remainder of the funds from Tourism Marketing and Advertising to
128 the New Tourism Initiative grant funding. The change was discussed and supported by both of the grant
129 review committees. A resolution to the County Legislature will be made for a budget adjustment in the
130 amount of \$12,000. A motion to reallocate \$12,000 from the Tourism Marketing and Advertising grants to
131 the New Tourism Initiatives moved by Steve Hugo, seconded by Stephen Nunley, and approved
132 unanimously.

133
134 **Tourism Marketing and Advertising** - Ethan Ash reported on the Tourism Marketing and Advertising grant
135 requests. There were three applications for the Ithaca Skate Jam, the Ithaca Fringe Festival, and the new
136 application for the Ithaca Bike Rental. The Tourism Marketing and Advertising Committee decided to
137 recommend fully funding all three. Ethan discussed the success of the Skate Jam and noted the growth
138 with the event and social media performance that was comparable to Grassroots. The Fringe Festival will
139 trade publications to try and get trade in the marketing. The Ithaca Bike Rental is part of the Ithaca Youth
140 Bureau that will have bikes available to rent to members and visitors in the community in Stewart Park and
141 along with Cayuga Waterfront Trail. Support was given to Ithaca Bike Rental with the feedback that their
142 organization reaches out for possible resources for partnerships, and marketing and awareness. Ken
143 Jupiter discussed the differences in methodology and level of confidence in the estimates of the number of
144 attendees and booked room nights at each event. The board also discussed questions about financial
145 sustainability relating to the Bike Rental program. The board encouraged Tourism Program staff to work
146 directly with the Ithaca Youth Bureau to ensure a successful business model. A motion to approve funding
147 for \$8,000 for Tourism Marketing and Advertising grants as outlined in the agenda packet by Ethan Ash,
148 seconded Susie Monagan, and approved unanimously.

149
150 **New Tourism Initiatives** - Anne Gossen reported on New Tourism Initiative grant requests. The Ithaca
151 Bike Rental was approved for funding for capital funding rather than the staffing funding requests. The
152 Fringe Festival, Ithaca Shakespeare Company, and Skate Jam were all repeat requests that were deemed
153 satisfactory. The Finger Lakes Beer and Cider Festival is a new applicant that will take place at the Steam
154 Boat Landing Farmers Market. Motion to approve funding for \$48,500 after the \$12,000 budget modification

Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB)
Meeting Minutes Draft – October 2014

155 from Tourism Marketing and Advertising Grants to New Tourism Initiatives, to the overall moved by Anne
156 Gossen, and seconded by Rita Rosenberg. Members discussed placing a contingency on funding for the
157 Bike Rental project that it show satisfactory progress, to be verified by the grant administrator, prior to funds
158 being released. The motion with this stipulation was approved unanimously.

159
160 **Staff Report** – Tom Knipe reported on the grant process and policy questions the programs need to focus
161 on. The four major questions that the Committees need to meet are:

- 162 1) The question of combining committees in order to address the duplication of applications for different
163 grants
164 2) The low number of applications for Tourism Marketing and Advertising (should the application process
165 be modified to make it easier to apply).
166 3) Should tourism infrastructure investments be differentiated from events in the process? If so, how?
167 4) Should there be ROI thresholds?
168

169 The Grant Review Committees will meet to discuss these four questions in further detail.
170

171 The deadline for Tourism Partners Award nominations has been extended to November 1st. There is a
172 minimum requirement for the nominee to have produced 200 room nights. The Tompkins County Planning
173 Department has released a draft of the Comprehensive Plan. There are three upcoming public meetings
174 from 4-7 pm in Danby on the 6th, Lansing on the 22nd, and the Tompkins County Public Library on
175 November 23rd. The meetings are set up as open houses so attendees will be able to walk in between
176 those hours to provide comments. The room tax report for the 3rd quarter had a noticeable gap between
177 room taxes and Smith Travel Research estimates; Tom will continue to monitor and report. Upcoming
178 funded events were mentioned. Member recruitment has received two applications from lodging; no arts &
179 culture applications have been submitted. The deadline for applications is November 20th.
180

181 CVB Report – Bruce Stoff reported discussed the contributions of Cornell Architecture students about the
182 possibilities for what a visitor's center could look like. He noted that The STR report for August had an
183 average daily rate of \$175 with occupancy of 90%. Foot traffic at the downtown location was up 63%. He
184 noted the Common Council will be voting on whether to approve plans for new a boutique hotel, a 123 room
185 property set to be built behind Carey Building, facing onto Seneca Way. The issues with the shortage of
186 rooms on weekends but lower occupancy mid-week and lack of conference center space were discussed.
187

188 **Update on Coltivare** – Sue Stafford reported on the delays with construction of phase one that has
189 prevented her students from using the kitchen space at Coltivare. She is hopeful that phase two will be
190 completed before the holidays in preparation for a grand opening. Members suggested the VFW, and
191 Cooperative Extension as alternative possibilities for kitchen space for her students.
192

193 **Announcements** - Rita Rosenberg invited members to attend the Ag and Culinary tourism community
194 gathering at GreenStar on November 10th at 6:00-8:30pm.
195
196

197 With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:01pm.
198

199 Respectfully Submitted,
200 Jennifer Turner, Administrative Assistant
201 Tompkins County Planning Department
202

203 **Next Meeting Scheduled**

204 Wednesday December 17, 2014

Understanding the Failure of the Finger Lakes Wine Center

*Lessons for the Tompkins County Tourism Program
Christy Agnese, November 2014*

Framework

Between 2004 and 2011, Tompkins County invested \$260,822 in the Finger Lakes Wine Center (FLWC). The Center was open between November 6, 2010 and September 1, 2012 - less than two years. In fall 2012, the Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB) adopted the “Tompkins County 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan Implementation Status Report” which Tom Knipe developed on behalf of the STPB Planning and Evaluation Committee. In adopting the report, the STPB agreed to take the following action in 2014: “Deconstruct the failure of the Finger Lakes Wine Center for lessons learned for the STPB and staff”.

The goal is not to do a deep forensic audit, but to review key documents, conduct interviews with key individuals, and write a summary of lessons and recommendations.

Community Members Interviewed

Martha Armstrong	TCAD, Tourism Capital Grant program administrator
Beverly Baker	Former STPB member
Larry Baum	FLWC treasurer
Nancy Battistella	FLWC board member and Six Mile Creek Vineyard
Fred Bonn	CVB director and vice-chair FLWC Board
Gary Ferguson	DIA, ex-officio STPB member
Ken Jupiter	STPB member
Tom Knipe	County Tourism Program staff
Jackie Kippola,	Former County Tourism Program staff
Gene Pierce	FLWC board member and Glenora Wine Cellars
David Sparrow	Former Chair of the FLWC board and the STPB
Kate Travis	2012 FLWC board chair
Chuck Tauk	Owner of Sheldrake Point Vineyards, Investor in FLWC
Scott Wiggins	Former STPB member

Interview Questions

- What was the role of the STPB and the Tourism Program in promoting the development of the Finger Lakes Wine Center?
- What do you think were the most important on-the-ground factors that led to the failure of the Wine Center?
- Was there something specific that happened or didn't happen that was critical?
- What background or structural issues may have contributed to its failure?
- What lessons might the STPB and Tourism Program staff take from the failure of the Finger Lakes Wine Center?

- Are there any other concerns or issues about the Wine Center that you'd like to voice?

Findings

- Opening undercapitalized negatively impacted all aspects of operation—staffing, fundraising, product and revenue development, signage, marketing, and website development.
- The business plan may have suffered from unrealistic revenue assumptions, and in any case was not successfully implemented. The center opened in the off-season, during the recession, which further impacted the implementation of the plan.
- The Finger Lakes winegrowing industry did not embrace the Center's marketing role or provide generous financial support to the Center, with exceptions among some of the industry's members.
- STPB adopted a role as a "cheerleader" for this venture, which impeded critical conversation to occur at the board and committee level.
- There was a strong overlap in leadership of STPB and Finger Lakes Wine Center Board.

Board Recommendations

Creating a board culture which encourages critical analysis

- The Tourism Board is comprised by a diverse group of individuals representing various sectors in the community. It is recommended that all board members bring their own expertise, viewpoint, and critical observations to discussions and projects at the committee and board level and are encouraged to ask questions on topics outside of their area of expertise.

Empowering evaluative role of staff

- Tourism Program staff, coordinators, and ex-officio members are professionals in the tourism field. It is recommended that these individuals provide critical analysis, evaluation, and recommendations to committees and the board.

Recognizing conflict of interest

- It is recommended the board revisit the conflict of interest policy to ensure that it meets the needs of the board.

Funding Recommendations

Encouraging transparency in grant making process

- Organizations often apply for multiple grant programs with different grant review committees over the course of multiple years. Since the personnel varies greatly, it is recommended that the board explore the concept of listing the lifetime total amount of STPB funding along with the new ask and recommendation.

Optimizing investment in new initiatives

Investing in new initiatives is inherently riskier than funding existing events, programs, and organizations, but it is vital to achieving the goals of the 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan. It is recommended that the board exploring the following:

- Establish a threshold of Tourism Program investment that triggers a more thorough review of an organization
- Further utilizing contingencies on grants to allow for greater accountability
- Developing a framework for assessing risk for new initiatives. The framework could provide a structured method for balancing the level of investment, likelihood of success, and the importance of the project to our overall tourism aims and goals.
- Reviewing the New Tourism Initiative grant program to ensure the program provides technical and funding support tailored to the needs of new organizations and programs.

Understanding the Closure of Ticket Center Ithaca

Lessons for the Tompkins County Tourism Program

John Spence, Steve Hugo, Lynnette Scofield; December 2014

Framework

Between 1997 and 2013, Tompkins County invested \$460,820 in Ticket Center Ithaca. In October 2013, the Ticket Center closed after 17 years in operation. In fall 2013, the Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB) adopted the “Tompkins County 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan Implementation Status Report” which Tom Knipe developed on behalf of the STPB Planning and Evaluation Committee. In adopting the report, the STPB asked the Community Arts Partnership (CAP) to take the following action in 2014: “Deconstruct the closure of the Ticket Center for lessons learned for the STPB and staff, and report to the STPB”.

The goal is not to do a deep forensic audit, but to review key documents, conduct interviews with key individuals, and write a summary of lessons and recommendations.

Historical Background

The Ticket Center (T.C.) was created to assist local organizations selling tickets to performances of any kind to save the cost of running their own box office.

- The Ticket Center began in the mid- 1980s as a store front in the Dewitt Mall and was largely volunteer driven. In the early 1990s, part time staffing was provided by the Community Arts Partnership. In 1995 The Clinton House first floor was home to CAP, the Cayuga Chamber Orchestra, the Hangar Theatre, and the Kitchen Theatre. The lobby was renovated to include the Visitor’s Information Center and the Ticket Center. In 2000 the Ticket Center computerized all of its operations. In 2009 operations were moved to Center Ithaca as the original Clinton House arts organizations all found new homes in different locations downtown.
- Organizations regularly participating in the Ticket Center program included the Cayuga Chamber Orchestra, The Kitchen Theatre, the State Theatre, the Hangar Theatre, Ithaca College’s theatre at the Dillingham Center and a number of single event producers.
- The Community Arts Partnership (CAP) continued to administer the program providing hardware (workstations, ticket printers, ticket scanners); collection and distribution of ticket revenues; display of client marketing materials; monthly emails promoting ticketed events; print advertising promoting the Ticket Center and IthacaEvents.com; weekly radio updates on WHCU; promotion through social media; and Promoter Motor distribution of Ticket Center event posters.
- Funding of the T.C. came from fees placed on each ticket sold, and intermittently from lump sum payments from organizations selling tickets. The County Tourism Program provided \$460K in operating support over 17 years. The STPB also required that all performance producing organizations that were receiving Arts &

Culture Organizational Development (ACOD) grant funding sell their tickets through the Ticket Center.

- When the State and Kitchen Theatres pulled out in 2013 to start selling tickets on their own The Ticket Center saw a reduction of 70% in ticketing revenues.
- The Ticket Center operation was closed in October of 2013.

Community Members Interviewed

Rick Adie	STPB Chair
Brett Bossard	Former CAP Executive Director
Will Burbank	Tompkins County Legislator
Richard Driscoll	Former CAP Executive Director
Jamie Ferris	CAP Board Chair
Josh Friedman	Hangar Theatre, Executive Director
Tom Knipe	County Tourism Program staff
Doug Levine	State Theatre Executive Director
Susie Monagan	Ithaca College Theater Department.
Stephen Nunley	Kitchen Theatre
Jon Reis	Former STPB Member
John Spence	Current CAP Executive Director

Findings

Role of the STPB and Tourism Program

- Over the years the Tompkins County Tourism Program provided direct funding to the Ticket Center, through CAP, for the program's administration and required that arts organizations receiving ACOD funding sell all of their event tickets through the Ticket Center.
- Beyond the providing funding the STPB left the administration of the program to CAP and relied on regular reports from CAP's executive director on the Ticket Center's condition.

Reasons for closure

Community Arts Partnership

- Poor communication by both CAP and organizations using the ticketing services created a disconnect between CAP and Ticket Center clients, a lack of trust, and the inability to come to collaboratively agreed upon solutions.
- Poor management practices. Key examples are CAP's signing a five year contract with the software provider while ticketing organizations were only asked to sign one year contracts, and in some cases were being provided service with no signed contract in place. Generally CAP received poor marks from clients and customers for not responding to requests for timely reports needed by the ticketing organizations, and for customer service in general.
- CAP's board should have been more aware and involved with the management decisions, particularly those involving large contractual obligations.
- CAP's reports to the STPB gave a more positive picture of the Ticket Center than was warranted.

Technology

- The Ticket Center grew from employing almost no technology to being heavily technology dependent. The software that allowed single ticket sales and subscription sales became more sophisticated, could deliver services beyond simply selling tickets, and became more affordable to smaller nonprofits over the lifetime of the Ticket Center. By 2013 organizations could buy their own ticketing software for under \$5,000 that would work seamlessly with their fundraising software and their marketing and promotional programs, and could provide an additional source of earned income for the organization.

Business model

- The Ticket Center started with a staff of one in the DeWitt Mall selling preprinted tickets out of a cubby cabinet. It was seen as a benefit to the organizations that could not afford to run their own box office and its sole purpose was selling tickets.
- The organizations using the Ticket Center became increasingly interested in seeing it provide a robust marketing component, driving potential customers into the theaters.
- The software developed to the point where data collection, reporting, and marketing support were considered basic requirements of any ticketing program. Selling tickets has become a small piece of a ticketing, marketing, planning and promotional program.
- The business model at the end required multiple elements of tech support, ongoing user training, program marketing and expanded customer service, all of which require significant resources to be successfully administered.

What might have made the Ticket Center a success?

- A cooperative model. If the participating organizations were to come together to decide upon and articulate desired outcomes, policies, and allocation of resources in a cooperative model there might have been the flexibility and the nimble reactions needed for a Ticket Center to succeed. The significant variations in size, programs, and priorities among the organizations using the Ticket Center may have made general agreement and collaboration difficult.
- A for-profit model. The other option would be the creation of a for-profit organization, or a 501c3 nonprofit, specifically focused on the management of a ticket center. A single-focus organization would understand the various elements needed for a successful venture: capitalization, tech support, training, customer service, marketing, human resources, etc.
- A successful Ticket Center needed an administrator that was in a position to focus on the evolving business of a Ticket Center, as opposed to a program that was tangential to its mission. At some point the Ticket Center should have been separated from CAP and become its own organization.

Lessons

- There needed to be a thorough, ongoing evaluation of the program, its intentions, finances, established indicators of growth and decline, and documented results. As a significant funder, the STPB and Tourism Program staff had an appropriate role to play along these lines. Don't be afraid to ask tough questions and demand verifiable answers.
- The Tourism Program should be willing to consider ceasing funding for a program that is not working. It seems clear that the Ticket Center did not have a working business model for at least two years before the program closed in 2013. The ticketing organizations were unhappy with the service and the options they were being given. CAP had been subsidizing the operation and documenting ongoing financial losses, and the Tourism Program was contributing funding and energy without satisfactory returns.
- In requiring ACOD recipients to use the Ticket Center, the County Tourism Program created a structure which added to difficulty in developing a healthy service provider-client relationship between CAP and Ticket Center clients.

Board Recommendations

Creating a board culture which encourages critical analysis

- The Tourism Board is comprised by a diverse group of individuals representing various sectors in the community. It is recommended that all board members bring their own expertise, viewpoint, and critical observations to discussions and projects at the committee and board level and are encouraged to ask questions on topics outside of their area of expertise.

Empowering evaluative role of staff

- Tourism Program staff, coordinators, and ex-officio members are professionals in the tourism field. It is recommended that these individuals provide critical analysis, evaluation, and recommendations to committees and the board.

Optimizing investment in major initiatives

- Establish thresholds of Tourism Program investment which trigger a more thorough review.

STPB Planning and Evaluation Committee

Thursday, November 20th, 2014 Meeting Notes

12/9/14, TK

The P&E Committee discussed three overarching policy questions related to CVB operations and evaluation. These questions arose at the 7/31 P&E Committee meeting at which the committee reviewed the CVB's draft logic and pathway models and set of possible evaluation questions. These policy questions could not be answered in the available time on 7/31. The STPB must provide guidance on these policy questions to the CVB so that Bruce Stoff and his staff can move forward with selecting final evaluation questions and metrics. The CVB, with support from Tom Knipe, will complete an evaluation plan for presentation to the STPB by early 2015.

Prior to discussing the policy questions, Tom provided some information from the Strategic Tourism Plan and from the Chmura study to frame the discussion:

- 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan Policies related to funding (pg 7):
 - **Increase heads in beds.** Prioritize funding support for marketing and product development initiatives that create overnight visitor stays, especially at times when there is excess lodging supply such as in the winter, on certain slow weekends during the "shoulder" season, and mid-week during months other than July and August.
 - **Go after additional spending, too.** Also support marketing and product development initiatives that hold potential to increase visitor spending more broadly, including by day-trippers and visitors staying with friends and family.
- Selected statistics from the 2009 Profile of Visitors to Tompkins County (the "Chmura Study"):
 - 69% of visitors to Tompkins County are repeat visitors
 - 47% of visitors to Tompkins County come for a university- or college-related purpose
 - 69% of visitors who stay overnight in hotels come for a university- or college-related purpose.
 - Visitors who stay overnight in hotels spend the most per visitor, per trip or \$335 on average. Contrast this with per-trip spending for day-trippers of \$51, and the average per trip spending for all overnighters of \$265.
 - The overall mix of visitor spending is made up of about 1/3 lodging, a little more than 1/3 food and beverage, and 1/3 other types of spending.

Questions

Question #1

Should heads-in-beds and attracting overnight stays continue to be the core focus of CVB marketing and sales efforts, or should this be broadened to include "additional spending"?

Related P&E comment from 7/31 meeting:

Heads in beds only or also additional spending? This is an important policy question. The long-term outcomes on the chart currently seem to focus on heads-in-beds, but the strategic tourism plan makes clear the importance of "additional spending" outside of lodging and several members of the committee also mentioned this. Should the charts be changed to reflect the importance of promoting additional spending in the CVB's work?

Question #2

Should our evaluation efforts better clarify the audience and information delivery methods of Visitor Services?

Question #3

Should Group Sales efforts purely target new meetings and tours, or should efforts be broadened for greater impact?

Related P&E comments from 7/31 meeting:

Community "Concierge" services. There is an important policy question to consider about whether the CVB should spend some resources on groups already coming. This isn't in the model. This relates to the question about whether the CVB should also be working toward a long-term outcome of promoting additional spending or just heads-in-beds.

Two tiers of group sales? 1) conference and meeting business, and 2) others (reunions, prospecting Cornell alums, busses, weddings, etc. CVB could provide/facilitate value-added services to Cornell enterprises bringing in groups. If we host them really well, could it generate more mid-week activity? And more spending and connection to community when here

Add "marketing the services of the CVB" as an activity to the charts?

Are there groups that we can develop through packaging and partnerships with local programs and organizations? in light of no convention space, limited product supply for conventional group sales. Examples

Answers

Question #1

Should the focus of CVB marketing and sales efforts be broadened beyond the CVB's core focus on heads-in-beds and attracting overnight stays to include additional spending as a goal?

Yes

Rationale/Discussion

- This is what the strategic tourism plan says we should be doing.
- Yes, open up broader view; explore the value of other marketing strategies than the 90 mile and out leisure visitor approach to marketing efforts.
- This policy is at the strategic level. We are not devising tactics by recommending a change in the policy. A change has implications for tactics, but it is the role of the CVB leadership to respond to changes in policy.
- Higher-education visitor as audience for more expansive services could be valuable.
- This policy shift also opens up possibilities to consider business travelers as a target for marketing efforts.
- Ithaca as the center of a region. Hub and spoke idea.
- More local or regionally focused marketing can also increase heads in beds – not just additional spending – since WOM is key and we can extend stays of those who are coming for higher ed or other reasons that our out-of-county marketing is unlikely to influence.

- There is a huge market within the 90 mile radius. Ithaca is a center of the region to which people in the region are drawn because of our rich resources in comparison to other communities in the region.
- A lower dollar value per visit for day-trippers could be made up for in volume of visitors since they are likely easier to reach, and the frequency of visits by close-by visitors can be increased. Marketing efforts to this audience could also influence upward the amount of money that day-trippers spend on average.
- Repeat customers are loyal customers. Can be encouraged to come more often, spend more.

Question #2

Should our evaluation efforts better clarify the audience and information delivery methods of Visitor Services?

Yes

Rationale/Discussion

- We need to understand and respond to demographic changes and who our audiences are and how best to reach them if we are to be data-driven.
- There is a generational shift underway towards more digital information and more socially interactive digital information that we need to be responsive to.
- Identify and focus on in-market visitor segments and what we need to do to reach them, eg. International visitors. Translated websites.
- There is also a segment of the traveling public that values and responds to a high-touch visitor information exchange such as the experience provided by our visitors centers. High touch visitor services are also important.
- Visitors Centers reach approximately 2% of annual visitors to Tompkins County: about 20,000 out of 1 million.
- We need to increase / maximize the cost effectiveness of Visitor Services.
- Understand our core customers. Who is using mobile, and are they our core customers?
- Tools to evaluate and results of evaluation will be key for identifying the appropriate tactical decisions.

Question #3

Should Group Sales efforts shift from purely targeting new meetings and tours, and be broadened for greater impact?

Yes

Rationale/Discussion

- Meeting space supply is limited, which limits the potential market for conventional group sales.
- We have been trying the same approach for many years, and have not moved the needle on increasing mid-week occupancy.
- We would like the CVB to be open to other approaches for group sales that could be effective.
- There is some value in spending time serving groups who are already here such as higher ed groups. Packaging/resources to integrate them more into the community, encourage highly positive experiences in the community, along with greater spending.
- We should research how other college towns approach group sales for possible lessons.
- Anecdote: we are seeing more parents visit outside of the formal parent weekends.
- TC3 should be included. 20% of TC3 students are from NYC.

- What experiences does the community have around which group experiences could be built that aren't meetings are coach tours.
- Event spaces at colleges...could we do more to explore additional uses?
- Retreat market.

Other Data (post-meeting)

As a follow-up from the 11/20 P&E meeting, I created two new charts based on mash-ups of Chmura figures showing:

- Estimated spending in \$ millions by industry sub-cluster (food, lodging, etc) and type of visitor (day-tripper, hotel, etc).
- Estimated spending in \$ millions by purpose of the trip (business, leisure, combined...and university/college) and type of visitor (day-tripper), etc.

Several interesting new statements this yields:

- University/college related visitors account for more than 57% of visitors spending, while only 47% of total visitors.
- Overnighters of all types (hotel, F&F and other, combined) account for 90% of visitor spending and day-trippers account for just 10% of visitor spending.
- Business visitors account for 15% of visitors, but 20% of visitor spending. Leisure visitors account for 75% of visitors, but 69% of visitor spending.

Ken Jupiter asked for more data on repeat visitors. The table that would likely be of most interest is in the full Chmura study, page 69 Table A.17 – attached.

- Not surprisingly, the portion of both day-trippers and those staying with friends and family who visit 10 or more or 100 or more times per year is much higher than for those staying overnight at hotels.
- Weighing the cost of acquisition of a new overnight visitor vs. day-tripper, along with benefits of reaching our most engaged visitors more often and with richer service/information vs. trying to acquire new customers seems to be an important calculus that this proposed policy shift opens up.

Table 2.16: Average Spending Per Visitor Per Trip in Tompkins County

Real # of visitors by type	164,638	276,167	95,596	311,910	843,000	531090
% of visitors	19.5%	32.8%	11.3%	37.0%	100%	63%
	Stay with Family Friends	Stay in Hotels	Other Lodging	Day Trippers	Average All Visitors	Average Overnight Visitors
Food & Drink	\$86	\$99	\$81	\$19	\$65	\$92
Lodging	\$0	\$136	\$71	\$0	\$52	\$83
Shopping	\$59	\$71	\$43	\$21	\$47	\$63
Local Transportation	\$15	\$20	\$17	\$3	\$12	\$18
Entertainment & Attractions	\$8	\$5	\$5	\$3	\$5	\$6
Other	\$3	\$3	\$0	\$5	\$4	\$3
Total	\$172	\$335	\$216	\$51	\$185	\$265

Note: Numbers may not sum due to rounding. Source: Chmura Economics & Analytics

ACTUAL SPENDING (In Millions)

Real \$ by type of visitor	\$28.3	\$92.5	\$20.6	\$15.9	\$156.0	\$140.7
% of Total Spending	18.2%	59.3%	13.2%	10.2%	100.0%	90.2%
	Stay with Family Friends	Stay in Hotels	Other Lodging	Day Trippers	Average All Visitors	Average Overnight Visitors
Food & Drink	\$14.2	\$27.3	\$7.7	\$5.9	\$54.8	\$48.9
Lodging	\$0.0	\$37.6	\$6.8	\$0.0	\$43.8	\$44.1
Shopping	\$9.7	\$19.6	\$4.1	\$6.6	\$39.6	\$33.5
Local Transportation	\$2.5	\$5.5	\$1.6	\$0.9	\$10.1	\$9.6
Entertainment & Attractions	\$1.3	\$1.4	\$0.5	\$0.9	\$4.2	\$3.2
Other	\$0.5	\$0.8	\$0.0	\$1.6	\$3.4	\$1.6
Total	\$28.3	\$92.5	\$20.6	\$15.9	\$156.0	\$140.7

Table 2.7: Purpose of the Trip

	Stay with Family/Frie nds	Stay in Hotels, etc	Other Lodging	Day Trippers	Average
Business	5%	27%	14%	11%	15%
Leisure	87%	60%	77%	82%	75%
Both	8%	13%	9%	7%	9%
University/College Related	44%	69%	45%	30%	47%
Note: Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Source: Chmura Economics & Analytics					

Real \$ by type of visitor	28.3177188	92.515878	20.6487792	15.90741	155.955	140.73885
% of Total Spending	0.181576216	0.593221622	0.132402162	0.102	1	0.902432432

Table 2.7: Spending in \$Millions by Purpose of the Trip

	Stay with Family/Friends	Stay in Hotels, etc	Other Lodging	Day Trippers	Total Spending by Purpose of the Trip.	% of total spending by purpose of the trip
Business	\$1.4	\$25.0	\$2.9	\$1.7	\$31.0	19.7%
Leisure	\$24.6	\$55.5	\$15.9	\$13.0	\$109.1	69.3%
Both	\$2.3	\$12.0	\$1.9	\$1.1	\$17.3	11.0%
					157.3898	
University/College Related	\$12.5	\$63.8	\$9.3	\$4.8	\$90.4	57.4%

Note: Numbers may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Source: Chmura Economics & Analytics

- By location of interview, first-time visitors were most common among university or college locations (55%) and lowest at downtown locations (26%).
- By age, first-time visitors were more prevalent among younger respondents: 42% of those aged 18 to 24 and 41% of those aged 25 to 34.
- By home region, 19% of New York respondents were first-time visitors compared to 72% of Canadians and 80% of other foreigners.
- By purpose of travel, 39% of visitors with a university- or college-related purpose of travel were first-time visitors, a higher* percentage than the 27% of those traveling for a purpose unrelated to the university or college.

Table A.17: Number of Visits to the Ithaca Area in the Last Five Years – Intercept Survey

	Day Trippers	Staying with Family or Friends	Lodging at Hotels, etc.	Other / Unknown	Unweighted Sample Total
1	27%	32%	49%	51%	41%
2	9%	9%	12%	13%	11%
3-4	8%	16%	11%	11%	11%
5-9	11%	16%	12%	10%	12%
10-99	34%	23%	13%	11%	20%
100+	10%	4%	1%	2%	4%
Not Specified	1%	1%	3%	2%	2%
Median	5.0	3.0	1.0	1.0	2.0
	n=448	n=162	n=779	n=114	n=1,503

Note: Numbers may not sum due to rounding.

Among all respondents, 41% stated that the trip into Ithaca that they were currently taking was the only trip to the area in the last five years. However, 36% reported averaging at least one trip per year to the Ithaca area over the past five years and 25% reported averaging at least two trips per year over the same timeframe. Repeat visits were most common among day trippers. Over half of day trippers averaged one or more trips per year into the Ithaca area while 44% averaged two or more trips per year and 10% reported more than 100 trips into the area over the last five years—a rate exceeding once per month.⁵⁴

- The average respondent reported a median average two trips to the Ithaca area over the last five years. The median average number of trips was highest among day trippers (5.0) and those staying overnight with family or friends (3.0).
- Those reporting one hundred or more trips into the Ithaca area over the last five years were dominated by those living close to Tompkins County. The top resident counties of these 55 individuals were Broome (8), Cortland (8), Tioga (7), Chemung (6), Cayuga (4), and Onondaga (4).⁵⁵

⁵⁴ A rate of 100 per 5 years is about once per every 18 days or 1.67 times per month.

⁵⁵ All the counties of residence of these 55 were New York State counties except for one unknown locality and two respondents from Bradford, Pennsylvania.



Tompkins County
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

121 East Court Street
Ithaca, New York 14850

Edward C. Marx, AICP
Commissioner of Planning
and Community Sustainability

Telephone (607) 274-5560
Fax (607) 274-5578

TO: Tompkins County Board of Legislators
FROM: Tom Knipe, Senior Planner / Tourism Coordinator
CC: Richard Adie, Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB)
DATE: December 9, 2014
RE: **Requesting state study and response on online property rental platforms**

Action Requested

Adopt a resolution asking New York State and the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC) to study the growth in short-term online property rental platforms such as Airbnb, VRBO, HomeAway, FlipKey and similar websites, and consider state legal and regulatory actions in support of Counties and local governments in Upstate NY in their efforts to enforce existing law, collect hotel room occupancy taxes and ensure compliance with existing health and safety regulations.

Background

The purpose of this memo is to summarize issues related to the growth in use of online rental platforms.

Short-term online property rental platforms provide attractive, cost-effective, and relatively secure methods for individual property owners to market properties online for short-term stays to paying guests. While short-term rental of private homes or rooms has most likely occurred prior to the growth in use of these online rental platforms, changes in digital technology and the tremendous popularity of these platforms, especially Airbnb, have significantly expanded this activity in the last several years. Online rental platforms, along with their hosts and guests, are major new players in the lodging economy.

The largest and most successful online rental platform in the world, the US and locally is Airbnb which has 25 million registered guests, and 800,000 property listings in 190 countries and 34,000 cities. In Tompkins County, there are currently about 240 Airbnb property listings and approximately 170 individual hosts, with about 75 of those being very active hosts. Although difficult to precisely measure because information is not made readily available by the companies hosting the online rental platforms, recent analysis by the Ithaca Tompkins County Convention and Visitors Bureau suggests that annual room nights in Tompkins County associated with online rental platforms exceed 10,000, with associated lodging spending of over a million dollars.

The expanded use of online rental platforms brings possible benefits and challenges to Tompkins County.

Possible community benefits include:

- Expanded lodging choice for visitors. Airbnb and other similar sites may offer a unique local lodging product that is attractive to a certain type of visitor which would be otherwise unavailable.
- Increased revenue potential to local residents who regularly host paying guests. In some cases, this may improve housing affordability for homeowners.
- Economic development through additional visitor spending in food and beverage, retail, and other sectors of the county's tourism economy.

Possible community challenges include:

- Interpretation and enforcement of County hotel room occupancy tax law.
- Uncollected room tax revenues due to non-compliance with the County room tax law. Airbnb activity alone accounts tens of thousands of dollars in room tax, much of which currently goes uncollected.
- Uncollected sales tax revenues.
- Enforcement of zoning regulations and health and safety codes by municipalities. In Tompkins County, there are likely both legal and illegal short-term lodging facilities using online rental platforms.
- Threats to housing affordability if rental units are turned into short term lodging facilities.
- Liability concerns for hosts and landlords.

County Role and Actions

The County plays an important role in tourism development, with room taxes supporting the Tompkins County Tourism Program. The program budget in 2014 is two and a quarter million dollars, with support going to local arts & culture groups, museums, festivals, community celebrations, beautification projects, and hospitality workforce development; \$600,000 in competitive grants to over 75 local tourism-related initiatives; Convention and Visitors Bureau marketing, sales and visitor services; and support for economic development services provided by Tompkins County Area Development (TCAD). Tourism generated over \$174 million in local spending in 2012.

Since first becoming aware of this issue, the County has provided an interpretation of the room tax law to include private homeowners who regularly rent a room in their home or who rent their entire home to visitors using an online rental platform. The County has made it easier to learn about the room tax law and register as a lodging operator by creating a room tax page on the County website:

www.tompkinscountyny.gov/finance/roomtax.

Word of mouth, local news stories, and these efforts along with the efforts of a group of responsible Airbnb hosts to educate its group members, have yielded a number of new room tax sign ups in the past year. In addition, the County Department of Finance is in the process of reaching out directly via mail to likely online rental platform hosts to encourage them to register. If needed, the County has the ability to use enforcement powers in the room tax law to support compliance; however, a challenge with both communication and enforcement efforts is that the platforms can make it difficult to identify properties and hosts.

Approach

Other communities in the United States have taken a variety of approaches to respond to these issues. In adopting this resolution, Tompkins County is asking NYSAC and the New York State government to study the issue in depth and for the State to respond as appropriate to support efforts to enforce existing laws.

Budget Implications

No specific budget implications. As compliance with the hotel room occupancy tax law improves, annual room occupancy tax revenues would be expected to be impacted positively.

Contact Information

Tom Knipe, Tompkins County Planning Department, 607.274.5560, tknipe@tompkins-co.org

Bruce Stoff, Ithaca Tompkins County Convention and Visitors Bureau, 272-1313, bruce@visitithaca.com

ENCOURAGING NEW YORK STATE TO STUDY AND ADDRESS ISSUES RELATED TO GROWTH IN SHORT-TERM ONLINE RENTAL PLATFORMS SUCH AS AIRBNB

WHEREAS, use of short-term online rental platforms such as Airbnb, VRBO, HomeAway, FlipKey and similar web sites by individual homeowners and renters to host paying guests for short-term overnight stays has grown significantly in the past several years, and

WHEREAS, by Local Law #4-1989 of Tompkins County, any person or business renting out a room or rooms for short-term (less than 30 days) stay in “a building or portion thereof which is regularly used and kept open as such for the lodging of guests” must collect and pay room occupancy tax to Tompkins County, and

WHEREAS, the use of online rental platforms has benefited Tompkins County visitors through expanded lodging choices; has increased revenue potential to local residents who regularly host paying guests, either through single room rentals or whole property rentals, has promoted economic development through additional visitor spending in food and beverage, retail, and other sectors of the county’s tourism economy, and

WHEREAS, the Bed & Breakfast Association of Greater Ithaca has requested that the Tompkins County government act to ensure a level playing field through the enforcement of all state and local regulations applicable to the lodging market and a group of responsible local Airbnb owners are encouraging local Airbnb hosts to comply with those same regulations so as to ensure equal treatment within the same market; and

WHEREAS, Tompkins County wishes to help ensure a level playing field for all legal lodging operators and ensure public health and safety in the local short-term lodging market, and has taken action to inform local hosts using online rental platforms of the County room occupancy tax law and make the registration process simple and transparent, and

WHEREAS, local hotel room occupancy tax funds are dedicated for use in developing local tourism, and uncollected hotel room occupancy taxes due to informal lodging properties hosting visitors through online rental platforms without registering as required with the Tompkins County Department of Finance have impacted the County’s ability to grow and support the Tompkins County Tourism Program and the local tourism industry, and

WHEREAS, the growth in use of online rental platforms has also created challenges for local governments in enforcement of local building and zoning codes and health and safety regulations, and

WHEREAS, The New York State Attorney General has taken recent action against Airbnb in other markets to support compliance with state and local laws; and Airbnb policies require all Airbnb hosts to abide by local laws; and in certain other markets in the United States, Airbnb has begun collecting taxes directly through its online platform on behalf of its hosts and submitting them to government taxing authorities, now there therefore be it,

RESOLVED, that Tompkins County encourages Governor Andrew Cuomo, Attorney General Eric Schneiderman and the New York State Assembly to study this issue in depth and explore possible state legal and regulatory actions in support of Counties and local governments in Upstate NY in their efforts to enforce existing law, collect hotel room occupancy taxes and ensure compliance with existing health and safety regulations, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Tompkins County Legislature encourages the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC) to also take this issue up in 2015.

CVB Report
Monthly Update, December, 2014

On Budget

Wrapping the Year

CVB is closing the budget year in good shape. With final 2014 invoicing coming in for website redesign, fall advertising and travel guide printing, we will close the year roughly 4% under budget, for a surplus/carryover of approximately \$40,000. This was above our target entering the year, but better than 2013. One reason for the larger carryover: we had budgeted for a fall Commons grand reopening celebration. This is now slated for late summer 2015.

Strong October

2014 room revenue remains above projections

Though occupancy rate and demand declined slightly compared to an unusually strong October 2013, Tompkins County Hotels continued on a record pace this month. Highlights from the October Smith Travel Research report:

Oct. 2014	Ithaca-Tompkins		USA	
OCC Rate	70.3%	-2.0%	68.0%	+5.3%
Ave Daily Rate	\$169	+9.0%	\$119	4.6%
RevPAR	\$119	6.9%	\$80	10.1%
Supply		0.1%		0.9%
Demand	36,087	-1.9%		6.3%
Revenue	\$6.1 mil	7.0%		11.2%
YTD Revenue	\$48.1 mil	9.9%		9.3%

Downtown Marriott Receives Building Permits

No date set for construction start

This long-awaited project took a step forward this fall when developer Urgo Hotels paid for construction permits (approx.. \$90,000) and fenced the building site in preparation for construction. While site work could begin this winter, it's unlikely to see much progress on the 160-room project until spring when temperatures are more conducive to poured concrete construction.

Hiring a Marketing Coordinator

Goodbye Cassie!

We bid a fond farewell to Cassandra Jenis who is moving upstairs to work with Ryan McCune in marketing and member services. We are launching a search campaign for a new marketing coordinator both internally and externally.

Evaluation Program Wraps Up

Thanks to CCETC and P&E Committee

The CVB is in the final stages of a year-long evaluation planning project that will wrap in time for implementation in the 2015 workplan. The project took advantage of expertise at Cornell to create top-down and bottom-up analysis of the CVB to generate logic-based evaluation criteria. The project revealed some areas of opportunity and raised policy questions that are explained in more detail in the P&E report. For the CVB, key takeaways from the project will lead to improved training, outreach and ideally, enhanced performance.

CVB Wins \$30,000 REDC Grant

Funding goes to Visitor Services Technology Initiative

Late news: The Ithaca Tompkins CVB was just awarded a \$30,000 Market New York grant from the Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council. The grant will fund phase one of the bureau's Mobile Technology Initiative. The multiphase project will undertake research, prototyping and delivery of a cost effective system to allow real-time digital communications with travelers via their smartphones. The system will support text, video, data, gps mapping, chat and voice to provide personalized visitor information to travelers regardless of the traveler's device or physical location. Congratulations to visitor services manager Jodi LaPierre and integrated marketing manager Kristy Mitchell for making it happen!