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

Date: April 16, 2014
Time: 3:00-4:30pm
Location: **CVB / Chamber of Commerce**

Attendees:

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

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

Also in attendance: Jodi La Pierre, Sarah Imes and Mary Rachun – **Convention and Visitors Bureau**

Agenda

Opener
March Meeting Minutes
Privilege of the Floor
Chairs Report – Rick Adie
Staff Report – Tom Knipe
Tourism Capital Grant Recommendations – Martha Armstrong
    Action – Recommend Tourism Capital Grants
STPB Budget Committee Report
    Discussion
CVB Monthly Report – Jodi LaPierre, Mary Rachun
AG & Culinary Taskforce Report – Rita Rosenberg-Barber
Upcoming Tourism Program - Funded Events
    And Collecting and Recording STPB Member Impressions

Discussion

The meeting was called to order at 3:06 PM.

Opener: Tom Knipe opened the meeting with an interactive exercise to engage the group in thinking about their personal experience with visitor services. All members were encouraged to speak with another person to get to know one another better and share experiences of a memorable trip that included experiences where they were well taken care of.

March 2014 STPB meeting minutes were approved with no changes

Chairs Report – Rick Adie congratulated the Community Arts Partnership on a recent article which featured the Ithaca Art Trail as one of the best art experiences outside of New York City. The May STPB Meeting will take place at the State Theatre on May 21st.

Staff Report

- A new STPB resource library will be available soon on an FTP site and will include access to the budget and progress reports. Anne Kellerman has assisted with this project.
- The Spring 2014 tourism grants have passed the legislature. Members of the EDC had questions about why The Ithaca Festival was not among the applicants. Tom and Bruce both met with the new Ithaca Festival director to encourage them to apply in this round, but they did not come forward with an application. Tom will reach out to explore options with them again.
- The CVB's evaluation planning work is underway with support from Monica Hargraves and CCETC. The process will take about 4 months and the outcomes will include an evaluation plan, logic and pathway models for CVB programs and clear performance indicators for the CVB. Tom praised the CVB for stepping up to model this approach to program evaluation and expressed a goal to develop a culture of evaluation across the entire Tourism Program.
- Tom and Stu Stein have recruited members of the Heritage Tourism Task Force and the group will convene a first meeting soon.

Tourism Capital Grant Recommendations – Martha Armstrong announced that there are $195,000 in funds in 2014 with $95,000 already dedicated to previous year's awards. There were six new applications. The review panel tended to give priority to newer projects in their award recommendations.

Application	Request	Recommend	Recommend Years
Finger Lakes Reuse Center	9,698	0	2014
Tompkins Planning: Cayuga Blueway Trail: Design Study	18,000	10,000	2014
CSMA: 3rd Floor Performance Space Capital Improvement Phase 1	55,134	55,000	31,000 – 2014 24,000 – 2015
Ithaca Children's Garden: Edible Forest Garden Phase 1	34,235	34,000	2014
PRI Cayuga Nature Center: Cayuga Lake Past and Present Exhibit	85,000	40,000	20,000 – 2014 10,000 – 2015 10,000 – 2016
Sciencenter Mini Golf Construction	100,000	25,000	0 – 2014 10,000 – 2015 15,000 – 2016
Totals	***302,067***	***164,000***	

- Board members had questions about CSMA and their contributions to tourism. *Tourism-focused events such as Spring Writes, Winter Village Bluegrass Festival and the Fringe Festival already take place there, and the improvements will allow more events including some types of meetings to take place there.*
- Members also asked about the Sciencenter's ability to reconstruct a golf course that would draw more visitors. There were feelings that the room for improvement was too small and may not make a sizeable difference from its current state – *The Sciencenter emphasized the need to increase the span of years of interest in children and felt that if they made these upgrades it would keep youngsters interested into their teen years.*
- A member suggested that the Blueway Trail signage work be coordinated with the Wayfinding Strategy. *It is being coordinated.*

Convention & Visitors Bureau Report Highlights – Mary Rachun: February was a robust month for the lodging industry with increases in revenue, rate and occupancy. The Farm to Fork grant was used for online display ads and YouTube video ads in key Northeastern areas and the numbers are showing far more success than print ads. Sarah Imes: Motor Coach tours have been a key element in the current focus on expanding mid-week traffic. A September Ithaca culinary tour is expected to book 60 room nights and will be the third tour this year.

Jodi LaPierre noted the two-day closing of the Visitors Centers which allowed staff to attend a retreat which focused on new ideas. CAP has asked the CVB to take over the Ithacaevents.com website to take advantage of economies of scale with the visitithaca.com overhaul, and they are planning to pursue this. Focuses on branding are in the works with some possible font and size changes.

Mary Rachun shared recent analysis showing that the Tompkins County lodging industry experienced significant growth between 2000 and 2013 with an increase in room supply of 42% and an increase in room rates of 65%, compared to a national increase in rates of 39%. Estimated revenues increased from $23.5 million in 2000 to $49.5 million in 2013, an increase of 110%. Occupancy has only slightly declined. An estimated additional 16,000 room nights sold a year, or 300 mid-week rooms per week, will take away a widening gap between room supply and room sales. This would move occupancy from 59% up to 62%. Some suggestions for increasing mid-week stays were motor coach tours, meetings and conferences.

STPB Budget Committee – Rick Adie asked members to provide input on the direction of the 2015 budget. The STPB Budget Committee met with administrators to discuss trends in the lodging industry as well as programmatic trends and opportunities. New hotel construction is still on the horizon. A new 70 room hotel may be constructed on Elmira Road possibly in late fall of 2015. Hotel Ithaca will feature 60 new rooms and will include a convention/meeting center. The Marriot at the east end of the Commons has a 16 month construction schedule and is expected to break ground this year. The Ithaca Commons projected completion date is November of 2014. PKF provided projections for Tompkins County which were for 7.7% revenue growth in 2014 and 7.1% growth in 2015. So the industry is expected to remain healthy but the County has a $60,000 obligation to TCAD in 2015 out of room tax and $30K is needed to replenish room tax reserves back to 3% of revenues. So this expected growth in room tax not expected to be available to tourism programs.

Members were asked to provide guidance to the budget committee about the importance of setting funds aside in 2015 for strategic tourism implementation. Discussion included mention of the importance of implementing the new Wayfinding Strategy and the possibility of redoing the Chmura study. The budget committee will work up guidance for program administrators.

Ag & Culinary Tourism Taskforce Report – Rita Rosenberg: A wide variety of community members related to Ag & Culinary had their first meeting to begin developing an implementation plan for ag & culinary tourism. The meeting explored strengths, opportunities, and challenges in the local ag and culinary tourism field. Ethan Ash: the task force is in the process of developing a 5 year plan by the end of 2014. To be included with the report will be a stakeholders list and list of local assets.

Announcement
Upcoming tourism grant-funded events were highlighted and members were encouraged to attend. Tom and Mike Mellor developed an online feedback form. Please use it to share information with other STPB members about your experience. https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/STPBeventfeedback

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:45pm

Respectfully Submitted,
Jennifer Turner, Administrative Assistant
Tompkins County Planning Department

Next Meeting Scheduled
Wednesday, May 21, 2014 at the State Theatre of Ithaca