

Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB) Meeting Minutes – April 2013

Date: April 17, 2013
Time: 3:00-5:00pm
Location: Convention and Visitor's Bureau

Attendees:

Name	✓	Representation	Name	✓	Representation
Angela LaPadula	✓	At-Large	Sue Stafford	✓	TC3
Anne Kellerman	✓	At-Large	Susie Monagan	✓	Arts-Culture
Anthony Hopson	✓	Ithaca College			
Christy Agnese	✓	At-Large	<i>Brett Bossard</i>	✓	<i>CAP, Non-Voting</i>
Ethan Ash	✓	Arts-Culture	<i>Fred Bonn</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>CVB, Non-Voting</i>
Gary Stewart	✓	Cornell	<i>Dwight Mengel</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>Transportation, Non-Voting</i>
Jon Reis	✓	Arts-Culture	<i>Gary Ferguson</i>	✓	<i>DIA, Non-Voting</i>
Miriam Musco	✓	At-Large	<i>Jean McPheeters</i>	✓	<i>Chamber, Non-Voting</i>
Paul Tatar	✓	Recreation	<i>Martha Armstrong</i>	✓	<i>TCAD, Non-Voting</i>
Rick Adie	✓	Lodging	<i>Will Burbank</i>		<i>TC Legislature, Non-Voting</i>
Rita Rosenberg	E	Agriculture	<i>Anne Gossen</i>		<i>Associate Member</i>
Scott Wiggins	✓	Lodging	<i>Beverly Baker</i>		<i>Associate Member</i>
Stephen Nunley	✓	At-Large	<i>Ken Jupiter</i>		<i>Associate Member</i>
Steve Hugo	✓	At-Large	<i>Mike Mellor</i>	✓	<i>Associate Member</i>
Stuart Stein	✓	At-Large	<i>Tiffany Gallagher</i>		<i>Associate Member</i>
Sue Perlgut	E	Arts-Culture	<i>Tom Knipe</i>	✓	<i>Staff</i>

Also in attendance: Nancy Grossman (Discovery Trail), Ed Marx (T C Commissioner of Planning, Air Services Board), Ronda Roaring (ilovethefingerlakes.com), Kathy Wilsea (Tompkins County Planning Dept.)

Agenda

- Opener – Pair Share
- Approval of minutes for March, 2013 STPB meeting
- Chair's report
- Discovery Trail Presentation
- Ithaca Commons Construction Presentation
- Tourism Capital Grants
- Airport Control Towers and the Sequester
- Ticket Center Update
- CVB Monthly Report
- Budget Committee Report
- Announcements

Discussion

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 PM.

Opener – A Pair Share exercise was conducted, and results will be used for Retreat agenda building.

March 2013 minutes were approved unanimously with one change: page 2, line 78, change Wiggins to Hugo in abstentions from ACOD vote.

Chair's Report – Rick Adie welcomed new member Angela LaPadula. Since the March STPB meeting, the grant recommendations were presented to the Legislature's Economic Development Committee and approved by the County Legislature. Rick thanked Jon Reis, Christy Agnese, Sue Perlgut and Brett Bossard for attending the EDC meeting. At EDC there was some discussion on evaluation of programs, which will be a topic at STPB Planning and Evaluation Committee. The Retreat will take place 4/20 at LaTourelle, with the meeting space open at 9:00 and the Retreat beginning at 9:30.

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Discovery Trail Update – Nancy Grossman thanked STPB for their continued support of the Discovery Trail, which is an organization of seven museums and the Tompkins County Public Library. She provided a slide show of background information, and noted full information is available on their website. Nancy focused her presentation on answers two questions during her visit today. (1) How does the Discovery Trail see their goals fitting into the tourism program and community? Their main goal of providing education has many matches with tourism goals and is of great interest in our community. (2) How does the Tourism Program fit into the overall Discovery Trail picture? Tourism Program marketing and advertising grants allow the Discovery Trail to develop and print brochures, which are distributed throughout NYS. Grants have also been used for website enhancement. Working with CVB, they developed a What's Hot? topic theme for the website, and are targeting the Rochester market to draw visitors. Overall visitor attendance has increased from 699,541 (2010) to 718,088 (2012). She noted the 2012 includes the first reports of visitor numbers from the Plantations Welcome Center.

In the comment period, Anne Kellerman asked what visitors were listing as important in the surveys. Nancy responded most learned about the Discovery Trail by word of mouth, which is difficult to target as a form of advertising to expand. A distribution company is used for brochures, which organizes coverage at accommodations and the Thruway rest areas, among other areas. Ronda Roaring asked how the justification for asking for tourism funding in light of the difficulty in tracking "heads in beds". Nancy said they also track website hits and how the hits match out-of-town advertising expenses. Survey-based research does provide some specifics including distance traveled whether visitors are staying in the community overnight. Steven Hugo pointed out a lot of the member organizations shared data in their grant applications and showed numbers of visitors who traveled over 75 miles. Nancy said advertising is focusing on radio and FaceBook this year. Tom Knipe said Ronda's question reflected a focus of the tourism program regarding data and efforts are underway to enhance tracking and reporting for room tax funded programs.

Ithaca Commons Construction – Gary Ferguson reported, starting by showing a video with graphics on the Commons construction and some of the projects being undertaken nearby. Some of the big contributors to the transformation of downtown will be the Argos Inn, Seneca Way mixed use development, and Breckenridge housing. The Commons rebuild will continue through July 2014, during which downtown and the Commons will remain fully accessible – he asked members to make sure others know this. Phases are demolition, installation of utilities (through November 2013) and completion of surface improvements (March 2014 through July 2014). It is expected there will be times when businesses have no water/electric service during the construction period, but it will be kept to a few hours at a time. The project is creating over 1,000 construction jobs and a tremendous amount of tax revenue. Tenants are being sought for the proposed Harold's Square project, which includes a main driver for downtown development – housing. Scott Wiggins issued a reminder to members that we are responsible for filling these new hotels. With this many rooms available, there will be no guaranteed sellouts except Cornell commencement. We need to focus on increasing the leisure market. Gary said downtown is particularly excited about clustering growth. This will be a unique package in a city of our size. Jean McPheeters said luckily these projects are not all the same thing. Discussion occurs at CVB about whether new hotel products will put others out of business, and maybe better use of some land exists for old sites. The Holiday Inn conference center will allow us to bring in groups in the 450+ range. The Holiday Inn will close November 2013 through May 2014, then reopen. The second tower will be completed in 2015. The Marriott construction period will be 15 months. Scott pointed out large groups book events a couple years in advance. Rick stressed we need to make people aware the Commons remains open for business.

Airport Control Towers and the Sequester – Ed Marx was present as a member of the Air Services Board. He said our airport is not closing, and schedules remain unchanged. Airlines are committed to maintaining flights. The tower is scheduled to close June 15. The County filed a lawsuit with many others against the FAA, which will go into the 9th Circuit Court in California. The sequestration is affecting towers across the county, furloughing employees one day per week. Ithaca's operations will not be worse than any other. The Elmira tower will control flights to within a few miles of our airport. There are two primary messages: Ithaca airport is operating safely, and schedules remain the same.

The FAA has two types of towers – staffed by FAA employees and operated under a third-party contract. Elmira has FAA staff. Ithaca has a third-party contract. FAA claims they can break the third-party contracts

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but not change the union contracts that are in effect for FAA workers. Ed finds this ironic, since the third-party contracts were developed because the facilities are cheaper to operate.

Tourism Capital Grants – Rick said the committee recommendations will be addressed individually due to the number of members who will potentially abstain from voting. Martha Armstrong provided a quick review of the projects. Full review data had been provided with the agenda. Martha said the review committee viewed applications in terms of Strategic Plan goals, and gave priority to construction over feasibility studies. New this year was the first time an organization reapplied for a project that had already received funding (Skate Park), and receipt of two interlinked feasibility studies (History Center). The Tourism Capital Grant program has \$85,000 available in 2013. The total grant pool is \$185,000 with \$100,000 allotted to future multi-year awards (2014-2016).

Application	Request	Recommend	Recommend Years
Community School of Music & Arts 3 rd Floor performance space Moved Hugo, 2 Wiggins, vote Yes unanimously	\$8,160	\$8,000	2013
Hangar Theatre: Hangar for All Seasons Phase 2 Moved Wiggins, 2 Agnese, vote Yes 15/ No 0/ Abstain 1 (Hugo)	\$9,800	\$5,000	2013
History Center: Feasibility of partnership with IAHF/Tommy Moved Tatar, 2 Kellerman, vote Yes unanimously	\$15,000	\$7,500	2013
History Center: Feasibility of partnering with Ithaca Motion Picture Project Moved Reis, 2 Tatar, vote Yes unanimously	\$15,000	\$7,500	2013
Sciencenter: prototyping of Galaxy Golf Moved Ash, 2 Reis, vote Yes 15/ No 0 /Abstain 1 (Musco)	\$25,000	\$12,500	2013
Museum of the Earth 10 th Anniversary Museum Enhancements * Move Wiggins, 2 Reis, vote Yes unanimously	\$68,680	\$32,000	\$12,000 (2013) \$20,000 (2014)
Skate Park Expansion (reapply) Move (\$0 funding) Wiggins, 2 Nunley, vote Yes unanimously	\$50,000	\$0	
State Theatre bathroom expansion and renovation Move Hugo, 2 Stafford ** Vote Yes unanimously after discussion	\$89,000	\$42,000	\$12,000 (2013) \$10,000 (2014) \$20,000 (2015)
Stewart Park Rehabilitation Phase 1 Building Improvements Move Ash, 2 Tatar, vote Yes 15/ No 0/ Abstain 1 (Wiggins)	\$120,000	\$70,050	\$20,500 (2013) \$15,000 (2014) \$25,000 (2015) \$10,000 (2016)
TOTAL	\$400,640	\$185,000	

* Discussion on Museum of the Earth: These are permanent exhibits, although related to the anniversary. Rick reported on a conversation he had this morning with Tom Knipe and Sue Perlmut. This application was not known to other grant committees who made recommendations that were passed at STPB last month and have been approved by the Legislature. If this capital grant passes, MOE will have received grants from four programs in Spring 2013, totaling \$80,000. Before next spring's grant round, STPB needs to discuss this scenario, develop means of sharing information between grant review committees, and examine whether a policy should be developed for annual organizational maximums in gross awards across all grant programs.

** State Theatre bathroom: Stu Stein asked if we need to address previous discussions about participation in Ithaca Ticket Center prior to voting. Martha said there are no established criteria regarding use of the Ticket Center, so she could not block the application. Brett said ITC participation is a factor in ACOD grants, but not part of capital grants. Moved on to Ticket Center Update, then returned to this topic for vote.

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Ticket Center Ithaca Update -- Brett Bossard reported a visioning meeting was held on Friday 4/12. TCI partners have voiced concerns about the model being used, and the State Theatre wants to use their own system beginning this June which will have an impact on the funding model because a large portion of funding comes through ticketing fees. TCI has received major funding from the tourism program over the years, and also gets subsidies from the Community Arts Partnership. A working group will be formed shortly to explore the various possibilities for changing the Ticket Center model in depth. In the short-term, the Ticket Center will remain open. The contract with the vendor is being renegotiated, and new partners sought. Brett said there are three areas for visioning: technology, location and staffing. He has been unable to identify the main objection the State Theatre has to TCI. Tom Knipe voiced the importance of the Tourism Program being actively engaged in helping find a solution to this issue. Ethan Ash reported he has been working on shared services models with Cooperative Extension. There was discussion on Friday about whether this is about TCI or shared services. All seemed to be on board on the shared services concept, including the State, and this will form a foundation for the working group's coming efforts.

Tourism Capital Grants (continued) -- Actions to move and second the grant recommendation for the State Theatre were reiterated by Hugo and Stafford. Passed by unanimous voice vote.

Budget Committee – Rick reported this committee has met concerning the 2014 budget. Budget Request Forms will be sent to administrators this week. Tom Knipe pointed out that we will ask committee chairs for the Tourism Marketing and Advertising, New Tourism Initiatives/Tourism Projects and Community Celebrations.review committees to make budget requests again this year.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:09pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathy Wilsea, Secretary
Tompkins County Planning Department

Approved by STPB on May 15, 2013

Next Meetings Scheduled

Wednesday, May 15 – 3pm
Wednesday, June 19 – 3pm