

Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB) Meeting Minutes – September 2012

Date: September 19, 2012
Time: 3:00-5:00pm
Location: Convention and Visitor's Bureau

Attendees:

Name	✓	Representation	Name	✓	Representation
Anne Kellerman	✓	At-Large	Sue Perlgut	✓	Arts-Culture
Anthony Hopson	exc	Ithaca College, Vice-Chair	Sue Stafford	✓	TC3
Beverly Baker	✓	At-Large	Susie Monagan	✓	Arts-Culture
David Sparrow	✓	At-Large, Chair	Tim Joseph	✓	At-Large
Ethan Ash	✓	Arts-Culture	VACANT	X	At-Large
Gary Stewart	✓	Cornell	Brett Bossard	✓	CAP, Non-Voting
Jon Reis	✓	Arts-Culture	Fred Bonn	✓	CVB, Non-Voting
Ken Jupiter	✓	At-Large	Gary Ferguson	✓	DIA, Non-Voting
Paul Tatar	✓	Recreation	Jean McPheeters		Chamber, Non-Voting
Rick Adie	✓	Lodging	Martha Armstrong	✓	TCAD, Non-Voting
Rita Rosenberg	✓	Agriculture	Will Burbank	✓	TC Legislature, Non-Voting
Scott Wiggins	✓	Lodging	VACANT	X	Transportation, Non-Voting
Stuart Stein	✓	At-Large	Tom Knipe	✓	Staff

Also in attendance: Kathy Wilsea (Tompkins County Planning Dept.), Ronda Roaring (ilovethefingerlakes.com)

Agenda

Approval of minutes for August, 2012 STPB meeting
 Chair's report
 Festival Program Report
 Nominating Committee
 Membership and Bylaws Committee Report
 Strategic Tourism Implementation Funding Opportunity
 Finger Lakes Wine Center Report
 CVB Report
 Community Celebrations Grants
 Proposed Administrative Changes to the ACOD Program
 Room Tax Revenue Report
 Announcements

Discussion

The meeting was called to order at 3:02 PM.

August minutes were approved unanimously without change.

Chair's Report – Chair David Sparrow pointed out the November and December meetings fall very close to holidays and proposed holding one joint meeting on November 28 (3PM at CVB), which was acceptable to members.

Tompkins County Area Development (TCAD) is financially stressed and the County Administrator has proposed funding the shortfall with County general reserve funds for 2013. Mr. Mareane sent a memo to PDEQ outlining the possibility of using some room tax money in 2014 and beyond. This would probably require changes to legislation. This will be discussed at the PDEQ October meeting. Will Burbank, PDEQ Chairman, said he has set up a task force to examine the suggestions.

The County Legislature accepted the Strategic Tourism Plan at their September 18th meeting. The Plan will be published and distributed. The legislature also approved the three Tourism Partner Awards

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recommended by STPB at last month's meeting. The TPA paving stones will be unveiled November 2, 9:30 AM at CVB, followed by a reception, and STPB members are invited to attend.

Festivals Program Report – Vicki Taylor-Brous reported this program has been in place at the Downtown Ithaca Alliance since 2010, and most of their work is with outdoor events. They consulted on more than 80 events in the past year. Their website for event planners is at TompkinsFestivals.com, login: [tcfestivals](http://tcfestivals.com), password: [festivals](http://tcfestivals.com). It includes a calendar of events so event planners can check for conflicts. The program has equipment available for events: pop-up tents, extension cords, bounce house, tables and chairs; and they are getting a small generator. They maintain vendor lists for food and performers. They worked on a strategic plan for festivals last year, and have interns to help with programs and projects.

Vicki has been meeting with Tom Knipe to explore ways to improve the program. Equipment loans will be by contract; branding is being developed for logo, email, and web identity (some info will be available to the public without password); an e-newsletter, quarterly reporting, follow-up survey form, and providing the Festivals manual (includes reporting forms) on flash drive. They have been providing reduced-cost printing to help event planners. They are working with the City of Ithaca concerning proposed regulations and fees, advocating for events. Monthly workshops will start soon: first Tuesday of the month, 1 – 2 PM at different locations. Topics will vary from management and marketing to good grant writing and volunteer management. They are not receiving inquiries from all of Tompkins County yet, and outreach is planned. They can also provide support to organizations from outside the County that are planning events here. Community Celebrations grant recipients get information on the Festivals Program.

Establish Nominating Committee – David said this committee needs to be established, with the task of producing a slate of officers for 2013. He proposes appointing the members who are leaving voting seats, because they cannot be candidates. Stu Stein moved to support appointment of David Sparrow, Ken Jupiter and Beverly Baker to the committee, seconded by Anne Kellerman and passed by unanimous voice vote.

Membership/Bylaws Committee – Tom Knipe reported the committee met and recommends filling the current at-large vacancy by appointing Christy Agnese, who has applied for other seats in the past. Tom will reach out to other recent applicants to see if they are interested in being considered for at-large appointments later this year. Members will soon receive a copy of the recruiting press release, and he encouraged them to share that with persons they think may be interested in STPB. Following the interview period, the committee will bring recommendations to the November 28 STPB meeting for vote. This allows adequate time for the County Legislature to make appointments in December. With the committee recommendation constituting a motion, the recommendation for Christy Agnese for appointment was passed by unanimous voice vote.

To aid this committee in board development work this fall, Self Assessment (yellow) and Board Assessment (pink) forms have been developed. These were distributed and should be returned to Sue Perlgut ASAP.

Strategic Tourism Implementation Funding Opportunity -- \$147,000 was set aside for implementation in the 2013 draft budget that has received recommendation by PDEQ. Final vote on the County Budget will occur later in the year. Following discussion at a Planning & Evaluation committee meeting, Tom Knipe drew up the draft guidelines that came with the agenda. This will be a competitive process to fund critical actions (some recurring, some new), and not subject to the 60/40 split. The funding announcements will be made before the deadline for 2013 Spring Capital Grant applications. Large projects with big impact are preferred, and two to five recipients are anticipated. Although this is one-time funding, recipients could apply for other types of grants for subsequent years. Goal is to implement critical actions as defined in the Plan. Outreach would occur subsequent to formal passage of the 2013 budget later this year, around mid-November. There has been no prioritization of critical actions and there is no intent to fund a particular one first. It is open to all organizations, not just those mentioned as lead organizations in the Plan. There was discussion on retaining the lower limit (\$25,000) and whether or not the 60/40 split should be included. Tom felt it is practical to allow the review committee flexibility to examine applications without 60/40 restrictions. Stu Stein suggested including in the guidelines a statement that these grants cannot be made to private companies per NYS law, and Tom has been discussing that with the County Attorney. Stu also suggested specifying no religious organizations.

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Guidelines moved for approval by Rick Adie, seconded by Ken Jupiter and passed by unanimous voice vote. A review committee will be appointed at a future date.

David took a moment to welcome visitors Ronda Roaring (ilovethefingerlakes.com) and Kristy Mitchell (Convention & Visitors Bureau).

Finger Lakes Wine Center Report – Fred Bonn reported as a board member of FLWC. The Center closed its doors on 9/4 as they are unable to meet obligations, and are reorganizing. They have commitments for about six events and are working with the organizers to make sure the events occur. Their licensure is intact, the rent and taxes are paid, and they are working with vendors on debt. David Sparrow has resigned the Wine Center board, and the board expects to appoint a new Chair at tomorrow's meeting. They are working with the County Attorney on resolving the \$24,000 New Tourism Initiative (NTI) grant they received.

The community has stepped up to see how they can help. TC3 is evaluating a new curriculum, which may partner with the Wine Center. They are also negotiating with the Holiday Inn for management of events. STPB Executive Committee has suggested that Jack Little do a review of the Wine Center finances, which will be part of the Wine Center board discussion 9/20. The board is intact.

So how did this happen? Fred said they opened undercapitalized yet operated two years. The board and organization were successful in obtaining a unique licensure, which is a unique and valuable asset to the community. They are a charitable organization with 501(c)3 tax status, so donors get tax benefits. They had commitments of member item funds from State legislators, but it was incredibly difficult to access the funds. The board hopes to come out of these problems by the end of the year.

Tom Knipe made a statement that he expects the County Attorney to ask for NTI grant funds to be returned. The grant was for a project, but the funds were used for general operations.

Following some general comments, Fred said the parking and proximity to the Holiday Inn were considered assets. It was the best location at the time and even now has the makings of being a very vibrant block.

CVB Report – Fred introduced Kristy Mitchell, CVB's new Integrated Marketing Manager. Kristy provided some personal background, saying she is an IC graduate with social media experience to bring to CVB. Fred said we need to look to the future, and Kristy can meet the goals of interacting with GenX and GenY. For example, he provided this tidbit: activation of mobile devices is now three times the birth rate. Fred reviewed the report he provided with the agenda.

Community Celebrations Grants – Beverly Baker reported for the committee and reviewed the chart of committee recommendations provided with the agenda. With zero funding recommended for the Veterans Parade, she noted they have obtained private funding. She read a note from Carol Kammen, the committee chair who could not attend today, that the committee appreciates the support of STPB, is seeing better applications, and provided praise for the program. Recommendations were moved by Beverly, seconded by Paul Tatar and passed by unanimous voice vote.

Proposed Administration Changes to the ACOD Program – Brett Bossard said this discussion has been going on for a long time during application review process and annual reviews. This proposal would move some administration to TCPD, reduce the overall oversight and reporting burdens on recipients and administrators alike, and result in reduced time spent by CAP on site visits. Although it would continue as a joint program, this opens some funds to grants that had previously been spent by CAP for admin. Tom Knipe said CAP has been doing an excellent job in administering the program, and any changes proposed today should not be perceived as any criticism of CAP. Action of the Legislature is likely not required to implement these changes; Tom will provide a report to PDEQ. Scott Wiggins moved to recommend the changes, seconded by Stu Stein and passed by unanimous voice vote.

Room Tax Revenue Report – Tom Knipe reported one hotelier who had not been paying room tax has reached an agreement with the County Attorney. The hotel started paying in June and has made some subsequent payments. The impact on the 2012 budget will be unclear until the end of the year. The Budget

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Committee should plan to meet early in 2013. It is expected it will be a couple of years before this debt is paid in full. Rick Adie asked if any discount was negotiated as part of the settlement, and Tom will check with the County Attorney on that. Rick also said he hopes the County will pursue such lapses more vigorously in the future. Fred noted in some areas there are vibrant on-line groups arranging rooms in homes and dorms, and they are not paying taxes.

Announcements –

- Scott Wiggins: Ithaca Motion Picture Project and Friends of Stewart Park are hosting a joint event on 10/13 from 1 to 4 PM that will include tours of Wharton Studio and Cascadilla Boathouse and discuss planned enhancements.
- Stu Stein: Congratulated David on concluding a challenging agenda on time.
- Ethan Ash: Cinemapolis is conducting a fundraising campaign to convert to digital projection, which is required nationally by mid-2013. This conversion will cost \$300,000 and involve all five screens. Ideas are welcome.
- Fred Bonn: The Chamber of Commerce/CVB Howard Cogan Tourism Award will be awarded to the Wiggins Family in an event 11/8 at Lakewatch. It will include a luncheon and have Michael Turback speaking about local foods.
- Jon Reis: The Apple Harvest Festival will be downtown at the end of September. The Greater Ithaca Art Trail event will occur two weekends in October. STPB is creating a calendar of events we help fund.
- Paul Tatar: As mentioned last month, the Canal Conference will be taking place soon in Oswego.
- Gary Ferguson: Dates for the Apple Harvest Festival are September 28-29-30.
- Brett Bossard: The Ithaca Rotary Club is sponsoring the Little Apple Fall Follies at the State Theatre on 9/28, during the Apple Harvest Festival.

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

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathy Wilsea, Secretary
Tompkins County Planning Department

Approved by STPB on October 17, 2012

Next Meetings Scheduled

Wednesday, October 17

Wednesday, November 28