

**Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB)
Approved Meeting Minutes – October 2011**

Date: October 19, 2011
Time: 3:00-5:00pm
Location: Convention and Visitor's Bureau

Attendees:

Name	✓	Representation
Anne Kellerman	exc	At-Large
Anthony Hopson	exc	Ithaca College, Vice-Chair
Beverly Baker	✓	At-Large
David Sparrow	✓	At-Large, Chair
Ethan Ash	✓	Arts-Culture
Gary Stewart	✓	Cornell
Jon Reis	✓	Arts-Culture
Ken Jupiter	exc	At-Large
Paul Tatar	✓	Recreation
Rick Adie	exc	Lodging
Scott Wiggins	✓	Lodging
Stuart Stein	✓	At-Large
Sue Perlgut	✓	Arts-Culture

Name	✓	Representation
Sue Stafford	exc	TC3
Susie Monagan	✓	Arts-Culture
Tim Joseph	exc	At-Large
Todd Miner	✓	At-Large
Vacant		Agriculture
Brett Bossard	✓	CAP, Non-Voting
Carol Chock	exc	Legislature, Non-Voting
Fred Bonn	✓	CVB, Non-Voting
Gary Ferguson	✓	DIA, Non-Voting
Jean McPheeters	✓	Chamber, Non-Voting
Martha Armstrong	✓	TCAD, Non-Voting
Tom Knipe	✓	Staff

Also in attendance: Scott Callan (The History Center), Nancy Grossman (Discovery Trail), Kathy Wilsea (Tompkins County Planning Dept.)

Agenda

1. Welcome new STPB member
2. Discovery Trail presentation – Nancy Grossman
3. Chair's Report – David Sparrow
4. September Minutes approval
5. Strategic Tourism Plan – review draft policies
6. CVB report – Fred Bonn

Discussion

The meeting was called to order at 3:07 PM by David Sparrow, Chairperson.

1. Welcome new STPB member – David announced the County Legislature appointed Ethan Ash to the vacant Arts-Culture seat last night, and welcomed Ethan to the board.

2. Discovery Trail presentation – Visitors today were Nancy Grossman, coordinator of the Discovery Trail (DT), and Scott Callan, Director of The History Center. Nancy spoke of the DT, saying it is a partnership of eight educational organizations. STPB helps DT achieve their marketing goals. Nancy reviewed their budget, which has four components of administration, marketing, KDT for students in Ithaca schools, and TKED for students in Trumansburg Schools. The student programs are directly funded by the school districts, and DT is not required to raise money for these programs. The DT Coordinator meets monthly with the directors and quarterly with the marketing committee. Their website underwent updates recently as part of a CVB project, and they are now featured on VisitIthaca, with hits increasing. They publish an e-newsletter, "Behind the Scene", and are beginning bus tours soon at Cornell Plantations, then will expand to other locations. Paul Tatar pointed out that Plantations has some clearance problems for large vehicles, and the Welcome Center does not have good parking for buses. Nancy gave a brief overview of the DT visitor's survey, and a handout was available. The final report will be

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presented to DT directors, posted on their website, and shared with STPB. Some of the questions had to do with if the respondent was a Tompkins County resident, if the group was planning overnight stays, if they intended to go to another DT location, and if they had children attending Cornell University. In response to questions, Nancy said most of the DT administration budget is raised through dues of the eight members, and the marketing budget comes primarily from STPB. David thanked the visitors for joining us today.

3. Chair's report – David announced that Jon Reis has asked that additional committee members join the Project Grants Committee. David asked Ethan Ash to join that Committee. Many hobbyists are expected to visit Ithaca next July for National Moth Week, and STPB will look into how we can help make this event a success. Todd Miner asked if Insectapalooza is marketed, and suggested making a bigger deal of it since it is an established event. David shared a New York Times article published this week on Cornell competing for the opportunity to build an applied science and engineering campus in New York City. Gary Stewart confirmed that if awarded this would be a very important opportunity for the University.

4. September minutes approval – Draft minutes were moved by Jean McPheeters, seconded by Jon Reis. Tom Knipe reported a member has asked for a change on page 2 – the dollar amount suggested at PDEQ for sustainability tourism should be "\$10,000 to \$20,000" rather than "\$20,000" and a that this amount was "mentioned" rather than "suggested" by a PDEQ Committee member. Amended minutes passed by voice vote.

5. Strategic Tourism Plan – review draft Policies – Tom Knipe reported on the committee's work. The review today should focus on what's missing from the policies and what could be better. They have a specific timeframe for the next four months, which will include a public meeting (11/29) followed by a public comment period, finalization of the draft and discussion with PDEQ and the County Legislature. The Plan has one vision, six aims, 14 policies. All the policies are new and included in the draft under review today, which was provided before the meeting. The Plan also has many goals and actions. Evaluation factors and performance indicators will also be drafted, and STPB members will given an opportunity to rate goals and actions on their likely performance on the evaluation factors via an online SurveyMonkey survey. Tom reviewed the six aims and a preliminary outline.

Discussion followed, (1) There was a budget problem about 1 ½ years ago, and STPB chose to stick with what we know is working. This item puts priority for existing successful programs into a policy. (2) Brett Bossard pointed out this is possible now because we have staff to do the examination. Jean said it is important for STPB to create opportunities but not be an originator. There was discussion on the government's role and STPB's role. Todd Miner said he finds this item limiting, as new things are tied to new funding, so might not develop without funding. Scott Wiggins said the committee tried to sketch scenarios that would move decision making from point 1 to point 2. (3) This is from room tax law and cannot be amended. (5) If STPB wishes to change the 60%/40% split of programs, it would require moving it through the County Legislature. (7) There was discussion about splitting this up, and finding a stronger term than "destination brand value". Tom will bring a proposal for new language back to STPB. (8) Grant recipients' sustainable practices could be part of the review process. (10) Can we require participation in data analysis? Would lack of participation disqualify an organization from future grants? Tom said the project assessment criteria can include these analyses. (14) Multi-year funding is currently in two grant programs, and perhaps should be implemented in other programs.

Suggested changes to the draft policies are noted here: (6) Prioritize marketing and product development **toward** initiatives that create overnight visitor stays . . . (8) Inspire environmentally

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sustainable practices by partners in the local tourism industry to capitalize on our brand as ~~efforts~~ **to be** a green community. (12) Invest in tourism product development in a manner that coordinates directly with tourism marketing strategy, and ~~vice-versa~~ **conversely**.

6. Convention & Visitors Bureau report – Fred Bonn said he hopes to regularly provide the report with the STPB agenda packet as this month, then the meeting time would address questions. September and October have been strong for our hotels, and some of that business is due to Southern Tier flooding. Restaurants and retail were not as strong. We are seeing hotel growth here that other communities do not have. CVB staff is discussing with Ithaca College having community events at the new Athletic & Events Center. Visitor numbers to Johnson Museum are strong. CVB is working on Winter Recess. Light in Winter may take a year off in 2012 and return in 2013. CVB has requests from eight tour companies for scouting visits. Regionally, none of the suggestions from the tourism committee will be included in the Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Plan. CVB is applying for a NYS matching funds grant that has been announced, but did not plan on this for the 2012 budget. A report from the state shows the impact of gas prices on tourism. Brett asked if the County gets tax income if hotel stays are funded by FEMA, and Fred said FEMA does not pay tax. Jean said she is hearing many Owego business will close, as they have been flooded multiple times and proprietors are giving up or retiring.

David announced he will not be able to attend the November meeting, and that Anthony Hopson, Vice Chair will preside then. With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:53 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Wilsea, Secretary
Tompkins County Planning Department

Next Meetings Scheduled

Wednesday, November 16, 2011

Wednesday, December 21, 2011