

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

**Date:** December 19, 2012  
**Time:** 3:00-4:30pm  
**Location:** Convention and Visitor's Bureau

### Attendees:

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

**Also in attendance:** Dwight Mengel (applicant for Government Transportation seat), Kathy Wilsea (Tompkins County Planning Dept.)

### Agenda

Approval of Minutes for November, 2012 STPB Meeting  
 Chair's Report  
 TCAD Task Force Recommendations  
 CVB Report  
 ACOD Report  
 Tourism Grant Program Report and Recommendations

### Discussion

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

**November minutes were approved unanimously without change.**

**Chair's Report:** David Sparrow reported the three At-Large appointments recommended by STPB passed at PDEQ on 12/5 and went to the County Legislature last night. The Membership Committee has a letter drafted for contact with non-selected applicants. Carol Kammen has asked that Jackie Kippola be appointed to the Community Celebrations committee, and David is happy to make that appointment. The TCAD Task Force has recommended funding to 12/31/2018 with some portion of room tax.

**TCAD Task Force Recommendations:** David reported the TCAD Task Force determined they don't recommend having all of the needed funds come from room tax. By keeping the room tax separate from the general fund, tourism programs will not have to compete for the money. On 12/7 the Task Force drafted a compromise proposal in memo form, advocating funding TCAD from a combination of types of funds.

Jean McPheeters reported the Task Force didn't want the room tax legislation reopened. Also, members who represented tourism came to acknowledge that TCAD work has some value for tourism. So, how to make this work? There is a limit to the time this plan is in effect (six years). The County has already committed to using funding sources other than room tax for TCAD in 2013. "Bumps" in room tax receipts (payment of back taxes) can be used without harming tourism programs in 2014. While new rooms do not equal increases in room tax receipts, during a period of adjustment the County can likely take 45% of new receipts for TCAD without triggering cuts in tourism programs. Jean felt the Task Force heard many of the points made by tourism partners. The Task Force worked hard and addressed many concerns. The

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recommendations will be an agenda topic for PDEQ on 1/9/2013. Jean has received a summary from Joe Mareane, which she found to be accurate. Joe has asked Task Force members to sign on, but she seeks comments from STPB members first. David pointed out previously Michael Stamm was reluctant to change the TCAD mission as it would apply to tourism, but Mr. Stamm now accepts the necessary changes do involve tourism.

In discussion, members voiced the need for STPB to be proactive in meeting with TCAD and being prepared to respond to any changes that may be proposed by the County Legislature. Stu Stein pointed out TCAD will get 6.25% of the projected room tax over the next six years, but the rest is protected under the recommendations. Rick Adie said very few citizens attend the public meetings on the County Budget, and that may be a time for us to keep tourism topics alive. Rick said the 2013 contribution to TCAD is covered by the County's general fund reserve, 2014 will be paid from room tax reserves, then 2015-18 will be from the decreed percentage and "bumps". David suggested establishing a standing committee to keep analysis current and remain ready for dialog. David also said other Task Force members learned a lot about the tourism program, but Task Force discussion never got into the rationale of business travel being supported in part by the work of TCAD. David had just received a fax of Career Fair data from Cornell, which holds 5 events per year. At one event they had 792 visitors – who can really say if that is business or education? Scott Wiggins said of the 27% "business travelers", 83% are visiting to look at colleges, so real business travelers constitute only 5 to 10% of total visitors.

Meeting discussion then turned to whether or not STPB should comment on the Task Force recommendations, and how to voice acceptance without voicing support. David distributed some copies of a draft resolution, which was discussed and amended. The amended draft was moved by David, seconded by Scott and passed by voice vote: 14 yes, 1 no (Monagan), 0 abstentions. (Attached to these minutes.)

**Welcome Guest** – David took a moment to welcome Dwight Mengel, who is an applicant for the STPB Transportation seat.

**Convention & Visitors Center Report** – Fred Bonn had sent a report with the agenda, and provided some updates. Christy Mitchell is moving quickly on Travel Guide updates, and it will be ready early in 2013. In January, Fred will share the CVB marketing plan with the Marketing Advisory Committee, then STPB.CVB receives monthly reports from Smith Travel, which reveal a troubling trend of decreasing room occupancy since July. Rick said the reports he receives at the Statler concur that the overall occupancy trend is down. Possible reasons for the decreases are a decrease in gas drilling in northern Pennsylvania, one fewer weekend in October this year than last, lack of the bump in hotel stays that occurred in September 2011 due to Hurricane Irene. But these don't necessarily add up to the trend, and this is something to watch very closely. Sue Perlmut said a friend who lives in the Adirondacks heard about the upcoming Rudabaga Curl on the radio. Fred said a Japanese reality show will be here to tape participants who are visiting from Japan. Jean said the Governor's announcements were made today about funding projects in the regional economic development councils. Tompkins County is part of the Southern Tier, which will receive \$91.7 million, and includes work on the Commons.

**Arts & Culture Organizational Development** – Brett Bossard reported he and Tom Knipe have worked together to modify administration of this program. Minor changes to the 2009 guidelines were approved by STPB at a previous meeting. Proposed additional changes will encourage long-term planning and budgeting. New suggestions are minor changes to the evaluation criteria, increase of the maximum award from \$25,000 to \$27,000 through 2014, and language changes on page 3 related to performing arts organizations' use of the Ticket Center. No action is necessary today. Seven of the eight current recipients are at the end of their three-year cycle and need to reapply. Tom said reallocation of 2012 unspent ACOD funds needs to be examined by the Budget Committee, and that money could be made available in 2013 for an award for the initial one-year phase of the program for a new applicant. This would come through either a set-aside of 2013 funds or use of the previously allocated but unspent funds, or a combination depending on the recommendations of the ACOD grant review committee and the STPB budget committee.

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**Tourism Grant Programs Report and Recommendations** – This report was emailed to members today. Tom reviewed the list of recommendations. Out of 41 total recommendations, Tom reviewed 11 of these that contain policy questions where STPB feedback is requested. Basic administrative changes will be incorporated into the new grant guidelines and grant applications that will be released in early 2013 as we publicize the spring 2013 grant round. Discussion involved how to analyze return-on-investment (ROI) and whether or not poor ROI could be used to cancel scheduled multi-year funding. There is currently no multi-year funding offered in this program, but all projects, including those that have been funded in the past would be subject to evaluation of ROI during the grant review process. Tom proposed several ways to engage more directly with applicants as partners in finding out what strategies are working or not, what they are doing to make improvements, and how we can help. Regarding item 29 (“Consolidate the TMA and TPB/NTI grant review committees into one committee”), several members expressed reservations and it was agreed that this question should be revisited when there is more time for discussion. Tom will discuss administrative items with the review committee chairs and STPB officers, and suggested that the policy questions be revisited in early 2013.

With no further business, the meeting **adjourned** at 4:36 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Kathy Wilsea, Secretary  
Tompkins County Planning Department

Approved by STPB on January 23, 2013

**Next Meetings Scheduled**

Wednesday, January 23 – 3pm  
Wednesday, February 20 – 3pm

**Resolution of the Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board  
To support the recommendations of the TCAD Funding Task Force**

12/19/12

The Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB) advocates strenuously that the revenues generated through the County’s Hotel Room Occupancy Tax be used solely for Tourism Program purposes. The STPB recognizes that, upon analysis by the Tompkins County Area Development (TCAD) Funding Task Force, Hotel Room Occupancy Tax revenues may be used properly to support the general activities of TCAD up to the limits reported in the TCAD Funding Task Force draft memorandum adopted by the Task Force on December 10, 2012.

Therefore, BE IT RESOLVED that the STPB supports the analysis and recommendations in the aforementioned draft memorandum and encourages its adoption without change as a policy by the Tompkins County Legislature.

Passed by voice vote: 14 yes, 1 no, 0 abstentions. December 19, 2012