

**Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB)
Meeting Minutes – February 2015**

1 **Date:** February 18, 2015
 2 **Time:** 3:00-5:00pm
 3 **Location:** CVB
 4
 5

Attendees:

Name	✓	Representation	Name	✓	Representation
Anne Kellerman	E	At-Large	Christy Agnese	✓	Ithaca College
Ian Golden	✓	Recreation	Sue Perlgut	✓	Arts-Culture
Ethan Ash	A	Arts-Culture	Josh Friedman	✓	Arts-Culture
John Gutenberger	✓	Cornell	John Spence	✓	CAP, Non-Voting
Lynnette Scofield	✓	Lodging	Bruce Stoff	✓	CVB, Non-Voting
Kelli Cartmill	✓	Lodging	Dwight Mengel	✓	Transportation, Non-Voting
Rita Rosenberg	✓	Agriculture	Gary Ferguson	✓	DIA, Non-Voting
David Blake	✓	At-Large	Jennifer Tavares	✓	Chamber, Non-Voting
Andy Zepp	✓	At-Large	Martha Armstrong	E	TCAD, Non-Voting
Stephen Nunley	✓	At-Large	Will Burbank	✓	TC Legislature, Non-Voting
Steve Hugo	✓	At-Large	Beverly Baker	A	Associate Member
Ken Jupiter	✓	At-Large	Carol Kammen	A	Associate Member
Mike Mellor	✓	At-Large	Jon Reis	A	Associate Member
Anne Gossen	✓	Arts-Culture	Tom Knipe	✓	Staff
Sue Stafford	✓	TC3	Jennifer Turner	✓	Staff

8
 9
 10 **Also in attendance:** Sarah Imes, Kristy Mitchell, Mary Rachun, Katherine Banko, and Jodi LaPierre (Ithaca
 11 Convention and Visitors Bureau), Ronda Roaring
 12

13 **Meeting Agenda**

- 14 1) January STPB Meeting Minutes
 15 • Action – Approve Meeting Minutes
 16 2) Privilege of the Floor
 17 3) Chair's REPORT – Sue Perlgut
 18 4) Staff Report – Tom Knipe
 19 5) 2015 STPB Goals - Discussion
 20 6) CVB Annual Report – Bruce Stoff
 21 7) CVB 2015 Work Plan Presentation – Bruce Stoff
 22 8) Arts & Culture Organizational Development Grant 2015 awards
 23 • ACTION – Recommend 2015 awards
 24 9) Strategic Tourism Implementation funding – Ken Jupiter, Tom Knipe (P&E Report)
 25 • ACTION – Approve recommended 2015 allocation process
 26 10) Ag & Culinary Task Force Presentation – Tom Knipe
 27

28 **The meeting was called to order at 3:01 PM.**
 29

30 **January 2015 STPB meeting minutes were approved** with a friendly amendment.
 31

32 **Chair's Report** – Sue Perlgut noted her gratitude for the fantastic work being done by committees. She
 33 went on to report that Stuart Stein's memorial service will be Sunday May 3rd at the Statler Hotel at 2:30
 34 p.m.
 35

36 **Staff Report** – Tom Knipe reported on the Tompkins County Planning Department's Work Plan for 2015-
 37 2016. He described his role and noted top level goals in implementing the 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan and
 38 supporting the STPB in providing oversight and strategic direction for the county tourism program and room
 39 tax. Areas of work include the direct management of five grant programs and contract administration for
 40 other funded programs. Direct work on implementing the Strategic Tourism Plan includes the Cayuga Lake

**Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB)
Meeting Minutes – February 2015**

41 Blueway Trail, Priority Trails Strategy and support for the Wayfinding Plan and Beautification Plan. Tom
42 noted the joy he finds in the variety of work and is looking forward to the various upcoming tourism
43 initiatives including the Agri-culinary Tourism Strategy and Heritage Tourism Strategy. He also reported that
44 2014 room tax revenues were over the budgeted amount by .015%, or \$4,000.

45
46 **Discussion of STPB Goals** – Sue Perlgut reported on the goals that were presented to the members of
47 the STPB that included possible action-oriented and policy-driven goals as well as goals that were removed
48 from the list of possible 2015 goals. Action oriented goals to convene a higher education tourism working
49 group and creating a communication plan in order to familiarize people with the board were noted as
50 personal goals of Sue Perlgut. Members discussed capacity and recommended prioritizing. Tom Knipe
51 made the motion to adopt the recommended 2015 goals to then revisit the list for possible inclusion of
52 possible goals at a later date. Sue Stafford seconded the motion. Creating a definitive timeline was
53 suggested for all the goals prior to the adoption. Tom Knipe withdrew his motion to adopt the recommended
54 goals to a later date. A timeline for all goals will be made available at the next meeting.

55
56 **CVB Annual Report** – Bruce Stoff reported on the Key West PR campaign that his staff created to create
57 buzz in Tompkins County. A borrowed travel site in Key West was used to poke fun at Ithaca's weather by
58 telling tourist to go to Key West instead. The ad campaign drew 124,835 web hits, over 183 news stories
59 and 92,224 Facebook impressions.

60
61 Bruce went on to report that 2014 had a record year of 356,000 room nights and \$166,000 in revenue
62 generated from online chats including 8,628 overnight stays booked by the CVB. Bruce went on to note the
63 CVB's support of the Strategic Tourism Plan and presented a model and diagram that directly relates to the
64 evaluation program currently being worked on.

65
66 Kristy Mitchell reported that web traffic at visitithaca.com was up 29% in 2014. Over 50,000 web hits and
67 2,600,000 page views were noted as being directly connected to the digital marketing campaign. The work
68 plan for the year will include more focus on the visitithaca.com website and will include a redesign for
69 mobile first to include the integration of IthacaEvents.com. The mid-week marketing campaign is now
70 running and will be moving forward into 2015. This campaign focuses on tracking exact room nights through
71 tracking codes provided by hotels in the area. Pay per click campaigns will promote Ithaca as a whole and
72 include marketing related to gardening and bird watching. Email marketing, contests, and trade shows were
73 also mentioned as marketing strategies moving forward. The re-opening of the Commons will be a top
74 priority between the CVB and Downtown Ithaca Alliance. Smaller sized travel guides have been introduced
75 and were noted to have worked well.

76
77 **Introduction:** Katherine Banko was introduced as the newest addition to the marketing department at the
78 CVB.

79
80 **Group Sales** – Mary Rachun reported that the mission of the group sales department at CVB is to book
81 hotel rooms during the week. With the limit of conference space in the area, the motor coach market has
82 become a main focus. Last year, their group has attended eight American Bus Association shows and plan
83 to attend eight this year. Last year their department had meetings with over 100 tour operators and hoping
84 to exceed that number this year. This year their department will reach out to local businesses as well as
85 both Cornell University and Ithaca College about the Commons, Coltivare, as well as new and planned
86 hotels. Dates have been set for three FAM tours (Motor Coach Familiarization tours). Their group also plans
87 to attend the North American Journeys appointment based show in New York City. This initiative will aim to
88 harbor interest in tours to Chinese professionals.

89
90 **Arts & Culture Organizational Development Grants** – John Spence opened his report by providing
91 background on the application process. He noted that a portion of room tax supports the Arts & Culture
92 Organizational Development grants. Each organization has been required to provide a year-end
93 report and summary of the application. The current contracts were funded from 2013 through 2015. The
94 eligibility for funding requires that the organizations are not for profit, have professional staff, and maintain a
95 space.

96

Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB)
Meeting Minutes – February 2015

97 All seven organizations met their required eligibility and were making progress towards their stated
98 objectives. An adjustment to the budget was proposed at \$7,654, using funds left over from 2014 in order to
99 fully fund each organization. The panel recommends each organization be funded at their contracted
100 amounts. In 2016, each organization will be required to re-apply. John Spence made the motion to
101 recommend the budget adjustment and full funding for all seven organizations, seconded by Ian Golden.
102 Members discussed reassessing investments moving forward. Questions centered on the return on
103 investment and whether funding for this program was intended as annual operating support. **Vote** on
104 motion: Yes 12; No 0 Recusals; 2 (Josh Friedman, Steven Nunley).

105
106 **Strategic Tourism Implementation Funding** - Tom Knipe reported on the two-step process for Tourism
107 Implementation funding. The process would require prospective applicants to submit a letter of interest that
108 would then be reviewed for eligibility prior to inviting applicants to submit a full proposal. Identification of the
109 specific timeline and the amount of funding needed for a re-do of the “Chmura study” are still under
110 consideration. The intent is to use a portion of the 2015 Strategic Tourism Implementation funding to
111 support a redo of the “Chmura study”, with the balance to be made available through Strategic Tourism
112 Implementation Grants. Tom Knipe’s report constituted a motion recommending the process described in
113 the draft Strategic Tourism Implementation Grant guidelines which were available in the agenda. **Vote** on
114 motion: Yes 14; No 0

115
116 **Ag & Culinary Task Force Presentation** – Tom Knipe gave a presentation about the Agri-culinary tourism
117 planning effort. He spoke to assets located in Tompkins County including farm, food, and beverage. He
118 went on to note some of the area’s strengths and weaknesses. He described the process by which 30
119 possible actions had been narrowed down from a list of over 300. A survey will go out to all members which
120 will be used to help prioritize the possible actions. Members discussed the difficulty in prioritizing the
121 initiatives and suggested focusing on defining the product and target audience. Discussions centered on
122 delineating agricultural economic development initiatives from tourism product development and tourism
123 marketing and promotion. Suggestions to engage other community partners that work with agricultural
124 economic development were made.

125
126 **Announcements** – Rita Rosenberg announced that Coltivare will be hosting an event on March 9th. The
127 event aims to bring restaurant owners, farmers, and chefs together to discuss their needs and coordinate
128 their efforts.

129
130 With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:09pm.

131
132 Respectfully Submitted,
133 Jennifer Turner, Administrative Assistant
134 Tompkins County Planning Department

135
136 **Next Meeting Scheduled**
137 Wednesday March 18, 2014