

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

1 **Date:** May 20, 2015
 2 **Time:** 3:00-5:00pm
 3 **Location:** CVB
 4

5 **Attendees:**

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

7

8 **Also in attendance:** Martha Gioumousis, Cornell Cooperative Extension Beautification Brigade,
 9 Ronda Roaring

10 **Meeting Agenda**

- 11 1) Opener
 12 2) April STPB Meeting Minutes
 13 • ACTION – Approve Meeting Minutes
 14 3) Privilege of the Floor
 15 4) Beautification, Signage and Public Art Program
 16 • Annual Presentation – Jennifer Tavares, Martha Gioumousis, Gary Ferguson
 17 5) Chair's Report
 18 6) Staff Report – Tom Knipe
 19 7) Committee Check-Ins
 20 • Agriculinary Tourism Task Force
 21 • Tompkins Festivals Steering Committee
 22 8) Room Tax Budget Education – Presentation and Q&A – Tom Knipe
 23 9) Special ACOD Committee Recommendations – John Spence
 24 • ACTION – Approve Recommendations
 25 10) CVB Report
 26 11) Announcements (time permitting)
 27
 28

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

30
 31 **Opener** – Sue Perlgut opened the meeting by asking members of the STPB to engage in an interactive
 32 quiz. Members were asked to form groups of 2 and 3 and rate top 10 tourist attractions in Tompkins County
 33 Sue then shared the results to see which group had the most correct answers.
 34

35 **April 2015 STPB meeting minutes were approved** with no changes.

36
 37 **Beautification, Signage and Public Art Program** – Jennifer Tavares of the Chamber of Commerce,
 38 introduced herself, both Chrys Gardner, and Martha Gioumousis of Cornell Cooperative Extension, and
 39 Gary Ferguson, of the Downtown Ithaca Alliance as partners of the Beautification, Signage and Public Art

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40 Program. Jennifer went on to provide background on the partners and primary functions. Cornell
41 Cooperative Extension was noted as handling the implementation of plantings as well as handling rural
42 grants components. The Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce was focus primarily on the wayfinding
43 and signage aspect of the program The Downtown Ithaca Alliance focuses primarily on the Ambassador
44 program. Beautification Committee members range from members of the STPB to stakeholders in the
45 business community and various other affiliations. Beautification program investments include funding for
46 plantings and maintenance, the Ambassador/hospitality program, community grants, public art and signage,
47 strategic planning, and administrative costs.

48
49 Martha Gioumouis provided background on completed projects within the Beautification Brigade. Through
50 partnerships and volunteer work, the planter boxes along the Tompkins County Public Library have been
51 planted as well as Aurora Street triangle at Ithaca College, City Hall, and the Ithaca Commons.

52
53 Chrys Gardner reported on rural communities grant management program, noting that funding of \$12,000 is
54 allocated yearly, with average awards of \$1,000 - \$2,000. These awards are set up as matching grants
55 through volunteer time, donated materials or town or village donated staff support. Funding is primarily used
56 for plantings and welcome and attraction signs. Recently funded items were noted as welcome signs and
57 monarch garden in the Village of Dryden, Town of Enfield's carved welcome sign, plantings on Groton's
58 main street, at both Newfield Elementary and high schools, and at Purity Point on Route 13.

59
60 Gary Ferguson reported on the Ambassador Program organized by the Downtown Ithaca Alliance. The idea
61 behind the program was to create a companionship program that will focus on hospitality and keeping
62 public areas clean and welcoming. The program currently employs 2 staff members per shift that are paid a
63 living wage. Duties of the ambassador position include concierge services, red kiosk fulfillment, visitor
64 services, painting, flower maintenance and graffiti removal. Plans for are removable outdoor reading room
65 on the commons are underway. Contracts with both TCAT and the City of Ithaca are also in process for
66 cleaning of bus stops and the Commons.

67
68 Jennifer Tavares reported on the plans to continue the work of the Wayfinding Strategy with an additional
69 grant allocation through the Tourism program. Feasibility and the scope for funding requests to the State of
70 NY and local leveraging will be critical actions needed for implementation. Six major goals of the
71 Beautification, Signage and Public Art Strategic Plan were noted as attractive, welcoming entrances for
72 primary travel corridors, easy-to-navigate communities, public art, attractive, colorful, and neat public
73 spaces and amenities in community centers and destinations, increased appreciation, awareness, and
74 participation in the community beautification projects, and an attractive built environment.

75
76 **Chair's Report** – Sue Perlcut noted the meeting she attended with Tompkins County Area Development
77 and went on to report on her attendance at both the Budget Committee and Heritage Task Force
78 Committees.

79
80 **Staff Report** – Tom Knipe reported on his work with the Monika Roth, Kristy Mitchell, Rita Rosenberg, and
81 Ethan Ash in putting together an application to the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service Farmers Market
82 Promotion Program in hopes of obtaining grant funding of \$50,000 that requires no match requirement.
83 Possible initiatives were noted as assessments in readiness for small farm visitor hosting, and a CVB
84 component that would support another part time staff member who would be in charge of development of
85 additional tourist packages. Examples of some potential projects were noted as Ithaca Fork Farm Trail, and
86 Open Farm Weekend. Tom went on to report on the Wayfinding meetings he and Jennifer Tavares have
87 attended and noted that the next meeting will take place with Ithaca College. Jennifer Tavares noted her
88 appreciation for the support Tom provides and the valuable partnership related to those efforts. Tom went
89 on to announce that CFA notice is out; applications are due July 31st. A presentation will be given to the
90 STPB on behalf of Tompkins County Area Development providing information on community services. He
91 went on to note the local effort of TCAD in collecting white papers for the Regional Economic Development
92 Council for the Upstate Revitalization Initiative which currently is putting together plans for the
93 \$500,000,000 contest. Agriculinary tourism and trail provisions are some of the noted areas of focus. Tom
94 mentioned working towards a lead application for the Blueway Trail that will likely include other projects. A
95 risk management plan for ice climbing was discussed. Tom further reported on the budget process that
96 starts next week and noted that the fall notice for funding availability for Strategic Tourism Implementation

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97 funds will likely be in the fall. Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce and Convention and Visitors Bureau
98 contract will be reviewed by board members in order to make the final recommendations. The Strategic
99 Tourism Implementation status report will be reviewed by the Planning and Evaluation Committee and
100 board members in order to identify a threshold for more thorough review of projects.
101

102 **Committee Check-Ins** – Ethan Ash reported on the agri-tourism conference he attended in Vermont and
103 noted the 1-day workshop he would like to host in Ithaca that will focus on educating farmers in marketing
104 techniques. Rita Rosenberg went on to report that Cornell Cooperative Extension and Healthy Food for All
105 has applied for a grant and received \$13,000 for a brew and cider fest. The Savor the Finger Lakes Festival
106 will be held September 3rd from 5:00-9:00 p.m. at the Ithaca Farmers Market. Tickets are between \$75.00
107 and \$100. Gary Ferguson reported that the Festivals Program has actively working and are trying to
108 reconstitute the Festivals Committee. He noted the survey will go out to the event planning industry to get
109 feedback on the program. Guidelines for technical assistance with local businesses will also be considered
110 in order to gage scopes of work. Plans are underway to have a full evaluation of the program in late
111 summer early fall. Members with interest in joining the Festivals Committee can contact Sue Perlgut or
112 Gary Ferguson.
113

114 **Room Tax Budget Education** – Tom Knipe opened his presentation by asking members what sorts of
115 information would be useful and what specific questions members have about the room tax budget, noting
116 the information provided will be considered when drafting the tax budget recommendations.
117

118 Tom went on to report on the current budget, background on reserves, and the budget request process.
119 The 2016 room tax budget development was also discussed. The growth in room tax revenues have gone
120 up 6% on average per year since 2003. Members discussed whether the growth in Tompkins County
121 compared to other college towns, differences were noted as county does not have of convention space or
122 contracts with outside marketing professionals. To view the full report:
123 http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/files/tourism/2016%20tourism%20budget%20presentation_STPB.pdf
124

125 **Announcements** – Sue Perlgut suggested board members send front end employees to the Hospitality
126 Star program on June 16, and 17. Josh Friedman announced that the 2015 Hangar Theatre magazine has
127 been published and asked members for ideas on specific place to place them. Gary Ferguson noted the
128 Ithaca parade next Thursday and Ithaca Festival following over the weekend. He went on to announce the
129 re-opening of the Commons which is scheduled August 27, 28, and 29th. Sue Perlgut announced her
130 theatre troupe is performing next Wednesday at the Tompkins County Public Library at 5:30 and that her
131 documentary can be viewed at the Library on June 9th.
132

133 **Special ACOD Committee Recommendations** – John Spence reported that the ACOD Committee
134 recommendations were initiated by the Friends of Stewart Park. Ken Jupiter noted that the definition of
135 culture and went on to note that the program for established arts organizations that have been operating for
136 at least 3 years, and with an audience of 5,000 a year. Members discussed high-level county investments
137 and suggested including more recreational based events. Anne Gossen moved to adopt the Special ACOD
138 Committee recommendations, seconded by David Blake. The special ACOD committee recommendations
139 were approved unanimously.
140

141 **CVB 2015 Report** – Bruce Stoff reported that the April STR report was up 6.3% and that the ADR was
142 \$148. He went on to announce the Tourism Fam trip will take place on June 25th. Board members can
143 contact Jodi LaPierre for more information.
144

145
146 With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:50pm.
147

148 Respectfully Submitted,
149 Jennifer Turner, Administrative Assistant
150 Tompkins County Planning Department
151

152 **Next Meeting Scheduled**
153 Wednesday June 17, 2015