

Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB) Final Meeting Minutes

1 **Date:** April 17, 2024
 2 **Time:** 3:00-4:30pm
 3 **Location:** TC Chamber of Commerce (124 Brindley St)/Via Zoom
 4

5 **Attendees:**

| Member | | Representation | Member | | Representation |
|----------------------|---|--------------------|-------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| Brett Bossard | P | Arts-Culture | Steven Stull | P | Arts-Culture |
| Laura Winter Falk | P | At-Large | Teri Tarshus | P | At-Large |
| Richard Floyd | P | TC3 | <i>Megan Barber</i> | P | <i>CAP, Non-Voting</i> |
| Jeff Golden | A | Ithaca College | Peggy Coleman | P | Chamber, Non-Voting |
| Alexis Zaharis Grimm | E | Lodging | <i>Heather McDaniel</i> | P | <i>IAED, Non-Voting</i> |
| Ken Jupiter | P | At-Large | <i>Frank Doldo</i> | P | <i>Transportation, Non-Voting</i> |
| Jenna Kain | E | Lodging | <i>Nan Rohrer</i> | E | <i>DIA, Non-Voting</i> |
| Doug Levine | P | Arts-Culture | <i>Mike Sigler</i> | A | <i>TC Legislature, Non-Voting</i> |
| Marian Levy Ware | E | At-Large | <i>Jennifer Tavares</i> | P | <i>Chamber, Non-Voting</i> |
| Kelly Makosch | P | Recreation | <i>Michael Miller</i> | P | <i>Associate Member</i> |
| Rick Manning | P | At-Large | <i>Jon Reis</i> | A | <i>Associate Member</i> |
| Greg Mezey | P | At-Large | <i>Chuck Tauck</i> | P | <i>Associate Member</i> |
| Bethany Parisi | P | Arts-Culture | Nick Helmholdt | P | Tourism Program Director |
| Barbara Romano | P | Cornell University | Kristin McCarthy | P | County Staff |
| Monika Roth | P | Agriculture | | | |

6 **Guests:** Dona Roman, Suzanne Smith Jablonski, Jodi LaPierre, Chris Stephany
 7

8 **Opening Remarks/Changes to the Agenda/Privilege of the Floor** – Chair Brett Bossard started the meeting
 9 at 3:06pm. Dona Roman, managing director of the Trumansburg Conservatory of Fine Arts, thanked the
 10 board for its support and provided an update on the conservatory’s progress. She noted significant
 11 increases in programming, marketing, and attendance, as well as the award of a substantial NYS Council on
 12 the Arts grant to refurbish their historic 1851 building.
 13

14 **Action: Approval of March 2024 STPB Draft Minutes** – The draft March 2024 minutes were approved
 15 (moved by Monika Roth, seconded by Steven Stull) as submitted. Barbara Romano abstained.
 16

17 **Chair’s Report** – *Brett Bossard*

18 Brett provided a brief update on the Budget Committee’s ongoing work, which is focused on achieving a
 19 reasonable spending projection for the upcoming fiscal year. This endeavor involves identifying strategies
 20 to align expenditures with already collected funds.
 21

22 **Staff Report/Q1 2024 Room Tax Report** – *Nick Helmholdt*

23 Nick reported on board recruitment, spring grant applications, and the launch of an online payment system
 24 for room tax collection starting next quarter. He also shared that the City of Ithaca is seeking public input
 25 on a proposed short-term rental ordinance and a downtown plan encompassing over 100
 26 recommendations. In the first quarter, \$492,000 was collected in room tax, with late payments bringing
 27 the total to \$564,000.
 28

29 **Presentation: CVB Q1 2024 Report & CVB 2023 Annual Report** – *Peggy Coleman*

30 Peggy shared key takeaways from Visit Ithaca's first quarter report, highlighting a strong start to the year
 31 despite industry visa challenges. Marketing and advocacy efforts drove sales missions, travel trade

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32 engagement, increased media inquiries, and higher web and social media traffic. These activities translated
33 to rising sales production and a positive economic impact. Additionally, Visit Ithaca hosted successful
34 events like "Ithaca Loves Teachers" and the eclipse viewing excursion, while launching the latest round of
35 agritourism microgrants to support local businesses and tourism initiatives. Next, Peggy presented the
36 Convention and Visitor Bureau's (CVB) annual report for 2023, highlighting key accomplishments. She
37 emphasized that Tompkins County is outperforming other communities in New York State and the country.
38 The CVB saw increased visitor engagement, with over 76,000 interactions, and successfully launched a
39 TikTok channel. Media coverage was extensive, with 97 tourism businesses featured in 2023, and the sales
40 office secured bookings for the new conference center. Overall, the CVB's marketing efforts, including
41 collaborations with content creators, have significantly expanded the destination's reach.
42

Report/Discussion: Bringing Ironman Triathlon to Tompkins County – Peggy Coleman

44 Peggy reported on an opportunity to host the Ironman triathlon event in Tompkins County. Ironman has
45 been holding an event in Lake Placid for 25 years, but organizers are looking to move to a new location.
46 The multi-sport event offers potential economic benefits through increased revenue and visitor numbers.
47 However, careful planning and coordination are necessary to address logistics such as street closures,
48 permitting, and law enforcement involvement. Potential locations for the event, including Taughannock
49 Falls State Park and Camp Barton (old Boy Scouts campground), were identified. The importance of
50 community support, input, and collaborating with transportation providers to manage rerouting and
51 athlete/visitor travel was highlighted. Challenges discussed included ensuring clean lake water for the
52 swimming portion in June, managing road closures for the cycling segment, and accommodating the
53 significant influx of visitors.
54

55 **Action:** Doug Levine moved, with a second by Steven Stull, to support the CVB in continuing to explore the
56 possibility of hosting the Ironman competition in Tompkins County. Motion carried.
57

Member Announcements

59 Members shared news items and events of interest to the community. These included updates on Cayuga
60 Chamber Orchestra, Ithaca College and Cornell University alumni weekends, Spring Writes Literary Festival,
61 Opera Ithaca, Downtown Conference Center, Friends of Stewart Park, Coltivare, and Ithaca Farmers Market.
62

63 **Adjournment** – Chair Brett Bossard adjourned the meeting at 4:16pm.