

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

1 **Date:** Nov. 20, 2024
 2 **Time:** 3:00-4:30pm
 3 **Location:** Statler Hotel, 130 Statler Drive, Ithaca NY/Via Zoom
 4

5 **Attendees:**

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

6 **Guests:** Carol Chock, Courtney Horner, Suzanne Smith Jablonski, Lonnie Jenkins, Bethany Ojalehto Mays,
 7 Margaret McCasland, Todd Saddler, Brynn Schmitt, Chris Stephany, Katherine Taylor
 8

9 **Opening Remarks/Changes to the Agenda/Privilege of the Floor** –Chair Brett Bossard opened the meeting
 10 at 3:06pm. No changes to the agenda.
 11

12 Several community members expressed concerns about the airport's expansion and its impact on the
 13 environment. Todd Sadler, a member of Extinction Rebellion and Cornell on Fire, urged the board to
 14 reconsider subsidizing high-carbon transportation, citing the County's climate goals. Bethany Ojalehto
 15 Mays, also a Cornell on Fire member, opposed allocating occupancy tax reserves for a new airline route,
 16 suggesting instead that the funds be used for sustainable transportation options. Brynn Schmitt, a local
 17 grandmother and Mothers Out Front volunteer, emphasized the need to consider the climate crisis in all
 18 decisions, discouraging air travel and encouraging broader thinking. Carol Chock, a former STPB and
 19 County Legislature member, expressed concerns about using tourism funds for infrastructure post-Covid,
 20 recommending careful evaluation of projections and commitments. Margaret McCasland, a Town of Ithaca
 21 resident, appreciated the airport's convenience but worried about climate change, suggesting that flying
 22 be made more expensive and alternative solutions be found.
 23

24 **Action: Approval of October 2024 STPB Draft Minutes** – The draft October 2024 minutes were approved
 25 (motion by Kelly Makosch, second by Ken Jupiter) as submitted. Barbara Romano abstained from voting.
 26

27 **Chair's Report** – *Brett Bossard*

28 Brett thanked attendees for their public comments and expressed gratitude for the hard work of board
 29 members throughout the year. He also acknowledged the significant work of the County Legislature,
 30 particularly in finalizing the County budget.
 31

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32 **Staff Report** – *Nick Helmholdt*

33 Nick welcomed Jason Sidle back to the board and introduced Courtney Horner, a new transportation
34 planner. He also acknowledged Jenna Kain's resignation, Teri Tarshus' reclassification as a lodging
35 representative, and shared updates on various initiatives, including Arts and Culture Organization
36 Development grants, membership recruitment, the Tompkins County website redesign, the visitor profile
37 study, and the selection of a firm to redesign the ithacatrails.org website.

38
39 **Minimum Revenue Guarantee for United Airlines service from ITH to IAD** – *Roxan Noble*

40 Roxan, the Tompkins County airport director, presented a proposed resolution to allocate room tax
41 reserves for a minimum revenue guarantee to resume air service to Washington D.C. . Roxan highlighted
42 the airport's significant role in the local economy, noting that visitors substantially contribute to sales tax
43 revenue. The airport is also working with the CVB and Chamber of Commerce on reverse marketing to
44 attract more visitors. The proposed revenue guarantee is considered temporary, but the STPB expressed
45 concerns about the airline's lack of specific details. The board inquired about potential involvement from
46 other stakeholders, such as Cornell University, and briefly discussed increasing room taxes as a revenue
47 source for tourism initiatives. Ultimately, the STPB tabled the resolution until the airline provides more
48 details, stressing the importance of securing a third flight, particularly an early morning flight, to better
49 serve travelers' needs.

50
51 **Membership & Bylaws Committee** – *Doug Levine*

52 On behalf of the committee, Doug presented the proposed bylaws revisions. Key changes included counting
53 Zoom participants in forum tallies, requiring video display during voting, and replacing "agricultural
54 representatives" with "agriculinary representatives." The committee suggested reducing arts-culture
55 representatives from three to two, sparking discussion about potential limitations on arts representation.
56 However, members argued that two seat can adequately cover the arts sector, and the board must factor in
57 other tourism interests. Residency requirements for board members were also clarified, noting employer-
58 appointed representatives may live outside Tompkins County.

59
60 **Action: Recommend revised STPB bylaws for adoption**

61 **Action:** Doug Levine moved to recommend the revised STPB bylaws for adoption. Kelly Makosch seconded
62 the motion. Motion carried, with Steven Stull voting in opposition.

63
64 **Action: Appoint 2025 Nominating Committee Members**

65 Nick reminded members that the annual nominating committee, appointed by board vote, nominates the
66 chair and vice chair for the following year. The previous year's committee members, Monika Roth, Barbara
67 Romano, Steven Stull, and Teri Tarshus, agreed to serve again.

68
69 **Action:** Ken Jupiter made a motion, with Greg Mezey seconding, to appoint Barbara Romano, Monika Roth,
70 Steven Stull, and Teri Tarsus to the 2024 Nominating Committee for the selection of 2025 STPB officers.
71 Motion carried.

72
73 **Member Announcements**

74 Members shared news related to Triphammer Arts, State Theatre, Kitchen Theatre, Chamber of Commerce
75 Business After Hours, Ithaca Loves Teachers, Collegetown Small Business Alliance, Historic Ithaca, and the
76 Ithaca Farmers Market Capital Campaign.

77
78 **Adjournment** –Chair Brett Bossard adjourned the meeting at 4:22pm.