

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

1 **Date:** Jan. 15, 2025  
 2 **Time:** 3:00-4:30pm  
 3 **Location:** Old Jail, 125 E. Court Street, Ithaca NY/Via Zoom

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 5 **Attendees:**

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

6 **Guests:** Maura Baldiga, Meloney McMurry, Chris Stephany

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 8 **Opening Remarks/Changes to the Agenda/Privilege of the Floor** –Chair Brett Bossard opened the meeting  
 9 at 3:02pm. The downtown conference center update was removed from the agenda because Suzanne  
 10 Smith Jablonski was absent due to illness. No members of the public spoke during privilege of the floor.

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 12 **Action: Approval of November 2024 STPB Draft Minutes** – The draft November 2024 minutes were  
 13 approved (motion by Steven Stull, second by Barbara Romano) as submitted.

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

16 Brett looked back on a successful year, highlighting the opening of the downtown conference center as a  
 17 notable achievement. He also expressed gratitude to his fellow members for their efforts and  
 18 acknowledged the challenges that sometime come with serving, particularly in terms of public  
 19 understanding of the board’s role in the County budget process. Brett concluded by thanking the group for  
 20 the opportunity to serve as chair for the past several years, noting that this would be the final report of his  
 21 tenure. Everyone thanked Brett for his leadership.

22  
 23 **Staff Report/Q4 2024 Room Tax Report** – *Nick Helmholdt*

24 Nick shared updates on several key initiatives. The County Legislature has approved the new STPB bylaws,  
 25 and Suzanne Smith Jablonski has been appointed to represent the Ithaca Downtown Conference Center.  
 26 Additionally, the Spring 2025 tourism grant cycle has been announced, with applications due February 27.  
 27 Regarding room tax collections, 2024 closed with total revenue of \$4,292,408, approximately \$150,000  
 28 below budget. However, reserves are sufficient to cover the deficit. A review of fourth-quarter market  
 29 performance showed flat occupancy rates, albeit with slight rate increases compared to the previous year.  
 30 The Visitor Profile Study's data collection phase will conclude on Jan. 24. Following this, the final report and  
 31 economic impact statement will be developed in collaboration with Future Partners.

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33 **Q4 CVB Report** – *Peggy Coleman*

34 Peggy shared several highlights from the CVB's fourth-quarter report. The organization's website saw an  
35 increase in traffic, with users engaging more with its content, and social media engagement also increased.  
36 Additionally, the public relations team secured 10 articles covering the CVB in the fourth quarter, and the  
37 sales team attended trade shows and hosted event planners, which generated leads and potential  
38 bookings. In addition, Peggy gave updates on the climate control infrastructure project at the Overlook at  
39 Taughannock Visitor Center and airport. A discussion followed on United Airlines' new flights to  
40 Washington, D.C. (Dulles) and the potential need for minimum revenue guarantees. The group also  
41 compared the new Dulles flights to the previous Newark flights.

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43 **Nominating Committee** – *Monika Roth*

44 Monika Roth, acting on behalf of the Nominating Committee, presented the slate of officers for a vote. No  
45 nominations were forthcoming from the floor.

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47 **Action: Appoint 2025 STPB Officers**

48 **Action:** Monika Roth made a motion, which Steven Stull seconded, to appoint Doug Levine 2025 chair and  
49 Kelly Makosch 2025 vice chair of the Strategic Tourism Planning Board. Motion carried.

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51 **Update: NY Short-term Rental Law** – *Nick Helmholdt*

52 Nick reported to the group on the new short-term rental law in New York State. His report and the  
53 subsequent discussion touched on numerous topics, including the law's current status, its implications for  
54 counties, and key provisions such as health and safety requirements and sales tax collection. The law is  
55 currently in a limbo state, awaiting a chapter amendment vote. Once effective, Airbnb is expected to  
56 terminate its voluntary collection agreement with Tompkins County and other counties in New York.  
57 Counties will be responsible for registering short-term rentals, with the option to opt out. The law also  
58 requires companies like Airbnb to provide data to the state. The group discussed concerns about potential  
59 interruptions in sales and room tax collection during the transition period. Nick noted that Tompkins  
60 County may have the capacity to create a registry that serves multiple counties. The discussion concluded  
61 with plans for ongoing education and outreach as the law continues to evolve.

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63 **Member Announcements**

64 Members shared various events and other items of community interest. Updates on the Ithaca Farmers  
65 Market included progress towards reaching the state park grant match, the ongoing parking lot project, and  
66 the Rutabaga Curl. Meloney McMurry, the new executive director of Friends of Stewart Park, introduced  
67 herself and shared that Rick will remain involved in a consulting capacity. Megan shared that Community  
68 Arts Partnership grants are due soon, with \$200,000 available in regrant funding from the New York State  
69 Council on the Arts. Other community events mentioned included the Winter Village Bluegrass Festival,  
70 Cayuga Chamber Orchestra and State Theatre performances, as well as the Ithaca Loves Teachers  
71 celebration. Laura shared information about her upcoming wine presentations and mentioned the recent  
72 publication of the *Slow Wine Guide*, to which she contributed the New York State chapter.

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74 **Adjournment** – Chair Brett Bossard adjourned the meeting at 3:51pm.

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