

**Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB)
Final Meeting Minutes – April 18, 2018**

1 **Date:** April 18, 2018
 2 **Time:** 3:00-4:30pm
 3 **Location:** TC Chamber of Commerce/CVB, 904 East Shore Drive, Ithaca, NY 14850
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Attendees:

Name	✓	Representation
David Blake	P	At-Large
Brett Bossard	P	Arts-Culture
Kelli Cartmill	P	Lodging
Josh Friedman	P	Arts-Culture
Steve Hugo	P	At-Large
Ken Jupiter	P	At-Large
Anne Kellerman	P	At-Large
Doug Levine	P	Arts-Culture
Mike Mellor	P	At-Large
Cara Nichols	E	Ithaca College
Stephen Nunley	P	At-Large
Barbara Romano	P	Cornell University
Monika Roth	E	Agriculture
Sue Stafford	E	TC3
Vacant	N/A	Lodging
Baruch Whitehead	P	Arts-Culture
Scott Wiggins	E	At-Large
Andy Zepp	P	Recreation

Name	✓	Representation
<i>Martha Armstrong</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>TCAD, Non-Voting</i>
<i>Peggy Coleman</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Chamber, Non-Voting</i>
<i>Gary Ferguson</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>DIA, Non-Voting</i>
<i>Anna Kelles</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>TC Legislature, Non-Voting</i>
<i>Dwight Mengel</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>Transportation, Non-Voting</i>
<i>John Spence</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>CAP, Non-Voting</i>
<i>Jennifer Tavares</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Chamber, Non-Voting</i>
<i>Ethan Ash</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>Associate Member</i>
<i>Jim Brophy</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>Associate Member</i>
<i>Erica Frenay</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Associate Member</i>
<i>Carol Kammen</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Associate Member</i>
<i>Jon Reis</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>Associate Member</i>
<i>Mary Kate Wheeler</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Associate Member</i>
<i>Nick Helmholdt</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Staff</i>
<i>Kristin McCarthy</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Staff</i>

Guests: Katie Borgella (Planning Dept.),

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8 Jonathan Froelich (CVB)

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 10 Chair Kelli Cartmill called the meeting to order at 3:05 pm.

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 12 **Opening Remarks/Changes to the Agenda** – None

13 **Privilege of the Floor** – None

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 15 **Approval of the March, 21, 2018 STPB Meeting Minutes**

16 **ACTION:** Ken Jupiter moved to approve the March 2018 minutes. David Blake seconded.
 17 Motion carried, with minor editorial changes.

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 19 **Chair’s Report – Kelli Cartmill**

- 20 • The Legislature voted 10-2 against the ACOD resolution presented by Dan Klein.
- 21 • Josh Friedman will be leading members on a “deep dive” exercise to define the
- 22 board’s priorities. He thinks it is a top priority to better educate the Legislature on
- 23 the work of the STPB.
- 24 • Moving forward, Kelli or another STPB member will attend PDEQ meetings.
- 25 • Anna Kelles echoed Josh’s sentiment, stressing the importance of getting the full
- 26 STPB story out – e.g., yes, room tax dollars help fund arts and culture
- 27 programming, but they also support sustainability/outdoor recreation and CVB
- 28 marketing efforts. She is doing her best to act as a bridge between the STPB and
- 29 the Legislature.
- 30 • Ken Jupiter said the Board will evaluate the Tourism Program as a whole this year;
- 31 the mandate from the County is to simplify the program as much as possible.

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- 32 • Brett Bossard suggested using the Annual Report 2017 as a teaching tool.
- 33 • Anne Kellerman was concerned about public perception of the Tourism Program
- 34 after the conflict over ACOD funding and thought some positive outreach might be
- 35 in order.
- 36 • Baruch Whitehead reiterated his interest in pulling together an arts and culture
- 37 committee. He and Kristin McCarthy will connect on creating a Doodle poll to
- 38 schedule the first meeting.
- 39 • Doug Levine thinks it is important to look at which arts groups are bringing in the
- 40 most overnight visitors/room tax dollars.

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42 **Staff Report – Nick Helmholdt**

- 43 • Program received a Letter of Interest for a Strategic Tourism Implementation grant
- 44 to conduct Phase II of the downtown conference center feasibility study. The grant
- 45 review committees have all met.
- 46 • 2019 budget request forms went out yesterday. May 14th is the deadline to submit
- 47 requests to Nick.
- 48 • The Lodging seat remains vacant.

49
50 **Budget Request: NYS Matching Grant Funds – Peggy Coleman**

51 Peggy Coleman requested that the Board vote to recommend the County cover a gap of

52 \$1,611 in matching grant funding with New York State. Traditionally, the County has

53 matched State funds 1:1.

54
55 **Action:** A motion was made by Andy Zepp, seconded by Stephen Nunley, to approve

56 use of funds for the NYS Matching Grant. Motion carried.

57
58 **Combined Budget & Planning & Evaluation Committee Report – Kelli Cartmill**

- 59 • Committees members met to discuss what to do with the budget surplus in terms of
- 60 getting a process in place for future budgetary decision-making.
- 61 • Kelli and Nick summarized conclusions drawn from the meeting, including
- 62 maintaining reserves at a minimum of 5% of the total budget and options for how to
- 63 allocate any surplus funds.
- 64 • Jennifer Tavares commented that the plan doesn't leave discretion about whether
- 65 critical actions should be implemented. She'd add language to qualify it.

66
67 **Action:** Anne Kellerman moved, and David Blake seconded, to accept Policy on Budget

68 Reserve and Surplus Hotel Room Occupancy Tax. Motion carried.

69
70 **Update: Combined Tourism Grant Panel Recommendations – Mike Mellor**

71 About 25-plus organizations applied for 40-plus grants. Funds requested totaled \$300,000

72 with only \$240,000 available. Panel voted to recommend funding about \$200,000, leaving

73 roughly \$40,000 for the Fall 2018 grant round.

74
75 **ACTION:** Steve Hugo moved to recommend the Spring 2018 Tourism Project, New

76 Tourism Initiative, and Tourism Marketing & Advertising Grants. Ken Jupiter seconded.

77 Motion carried. Stephen Nunley abstained.

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Update: Tourism Capital Grant Panel Recommendations – Martha Armstrong

- Seven organizations requested funding; six applied for capital investment grants and one, the Ithaca Children’s Garden, applied for help with a feasibility study.
- The program has \$206,000 available for 2018. It was the committee’s recommendation that the full amount be awarded for 2018 and an additional \$40,000 be awarded through multi-year grants.
- The committee also recommended that unspent funds (\$13,182) from the Sciencecenter’s 2015 Sagan Planet Walk initiative be repurposed to support its 2018 proposal.
- The committee did not recommend funding PRI’s proposal.

Action: A motion was made by Mike Mellor, seconded by David Blake, to recommend funding the 2018 Tourism Capital Grants. Motion carried. Doug Levine abstained.

Update: Community Celebrations Grant Panel Recommendations – Carol Kammen

- There were a total of 23 applications, of which four were denied funding.
- The committee recommends \$24,730 in grants, which leaves \$11,860 for the Fall 2018 round.

Action: A motion was made by David Blake, seconded by Anne Kellerman, to recommend the Spring 2018 Community Celebration grants. Motion carried. Doug Levine abstained.

Final Draft: Outdoor Recreation Tourism Implementation Plan – Andy Zepp

- Andy Zepp thanked County and CVB staff for their support in creating the Outdoor Recreation Tourism Implementation Plan.
- County received 25 written comments from the public on topics ranging from trails development, lake access, and pickleball. (Andy explained that pickleball does not fit because the plan does not include “active sports.”)
- Anna suggested doing a presentation on the plan for PDEQ.

Action: Brett Bossard moved to accept the Outdoor Recreation Tourism Implementation Plan. Stephen Nunley seconded. Motion carried.

CVB 1st Quarter: Jonathan Froelich

- Jonathan updated members on recent initiatives by his department to attract meeting- and conference-based tourism to Tompkins County.
- Albany is a hotbed for professional associations in New York State, and the CVB wants to establish Ithaca’s reputation there as a top meeting destination.
- Jonathan is in communication with associations involved with organized sports, for example. He and Peggy both asked members who belong to state or regional associations to reach out to them regarding conference planning.
- Baruch Whitehead asked if the County has the infrastructure to support big conferences. Peggy said no but CVB looks for boutique niche opportunities, such as Create Upstate. There is also emphasis on filling hotel beds Sunday-Thursday.

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125 **Member Announcements**

- 126 • Spring Writes Literary Festival is May 3-6. It features 45 events, most of them free.
- 127 • The Dorothy Cotton Jubilee Singers will hold a free concert May 11th at the State.
- 128 • The world premiere of “Brawler” continues into its second week of performances at
129 the Kitchen Theatre.
- 130 • Lime Bike is launching its bike-sharing program in Ithaca soon. Company will be
131 giving a presentation to Chamber of Commerce staff; Jennifer Tavares asked if the
132 STPB would be interested in having Lime Bike come to a board meeting as well.
- 133 • The Finger Lakes Environmental Film Festival just concluded. Superman weekend
134 is coming up April 21st at Cinemapolis. “Columbia Revolt,” a documentary on the
135 1968 student occupation of Columbia University, is playing April 26th.
- 136 • New York City tribute band “Saved by the ‘90s” will play April 27th at the “Benefit My
137 State” fund-raiser as part of the State Theatre’s 90th Birthday Celebration.
- 138 • Anna encouraged members to email her announcements and other newsworthy
139 blurbs for posting on the Fall Creek and DeWitt Park listservs. She can also bring
140 up relevant items during “Privilege of the Floor” at Legislature meetings.

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142 **Mission Impact Exercise – Josh Friedman**

- 143 • Josh led the members on the first part of an exercise to define a broader, long-term
144 mission impact statement for the STPB. He ran a similar exercise for the Hangar as
145 director there.
- 146 • He asked the members for the time being to focus on answering just two questions:
147 what is the big picture? What do we want this program to do for our community?
- 148 • Members broke into smaller groups with instructions from Josh to come up with 7
149 goals each and whittle them down to 5. He will compile lists from the groups’
150 notetakers and continue the exercise at the next meeting.
- 151 • He asked each group to share one highlight from their discussion. They included
152 the following possibilities:
 - 153 1) Developing our brand as a community
 - 154 2) Enhancing existing assets (e.g. Stewart Park)
 - 155 3) Learning more about ROI and its role in tourism development
 - 156 4) Ensuring a sustainable room tax rate for sustainable growth
 - 157 5) Approaching tourism from a packaging perspective (e.g. CityPass, family travel,
158 outdoor recreation offerings)
 - 159 6) Maintaining the County’s appeal as a place with a wonderful quality of life while
160 achieving more heads in beds.

161

162 The meeting was adjourned at 4:46 by Chair Kelli Cartmill.