

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

1 **Date:** July 18, 2018
 2 **Time:** 3:00-4:30pm
 3 **Location:** La Tourelle, Ithaca, NY 14850
 4

5 **Attendees:**

Name	✓	Representation	Name	✓	Representation
David Blake	P	At-Large	Martha Armstrong	P	TCAD, Non-Voting
Brett Bossard	P	Arts-Culture	Peggy Coleman	P	Chamber, Non-Voting
Kelli Cartmill	P	Lodging	Gary Ferguson	P	DIA, Non-Voting
Josh Friedman	P	Arts-Culture	Anna Kelles	A	TC Legislature, Non-Voting
Steve Hugo	A	At-Large	Dwight Mengel	A	Transportation, Non-Voting
Ken Jupiter	P	At-Large	John Spence	E	CAP, Non-Voting
Anne Kellerman	P	At-Large	Jennifer Tavares	P	Chamber, Non-Voting
Doug Levine	P	Arts-Culture	Ethan Ash	A	Associate Member
Mike Mellor	P	At-Large	Jim Brophy	A	Associate Member
Cara Nichols	P	Ithaca College	Erica Frenay	E	Associate Member
Stephen Nunley	P	At-Large	Carol Kammen	A	Associate Member
Barbara Romano	P	Cornell University	Jon Reis	P	Associate Member
Monika Roth	P	Agriculture	Nick Helmholdt	P	Staff
Sue Stafford	E	TC3	Kristin McCarthy	P	Staff
Katie Kutz	P	Lodging			
Baruch Whitehead	E	Arts-Culture			
Scott Wiggins	P	At-Large			
Andy Zepp	P	Recreation			

7
 8 **Guests:** Ronda Roaring, Georgia Lesh (PRI), Hector Chang & Victoria Armstrong (Bike Walk
 9 Tompkins)

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

12
 13 **Opening Remarks/Changes to the Agenda** – Kelli welcomed everyone. Later in the meeting,
 14 the Board voted on the Downtown Ithaca Alliance’s application for a Strategic Tourism Initiative
 15 grant to fund Phase 2 of the Downtown Conference Center Feasibility Study, which was a change
 16 to the agenda.

17 **Approval of the June 20, 2018 STPB Meeting Minutes**

18 **Action:** Anne Kellerman moved to approve the June 2018 minutes. Brett Bossard seconded.
 19 Motion carried.

20 **Privilege of the Floor** – Star Bressler, executive director of the Discovery Trail, shared that
 21 organization’s perspective on how changes contained within the proposed 2019 County Tourism
 22 Program budget would negatively impact their operations. Ronda Roaring spoke about her
 23 experience attending the Finger Lakes International Dragon Boat Festival at Taughannock.

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

25 Kelli welcomed Katie Kutz, the Board’s new Lodging representative, to the meeting.

26 **Staff Report – Nick Helmholdt**

27 Applications for the 2018 Fall Tourism Grant round are due September 11th, with funding available
 28 for Community Celebration and New Tourism Initiative grants. A grant application workshop is
 29 scheduled for August 21st at the Tompkins County Public Library. Nick attends monthly PDEQ
 30 meetings, and STPB members are encouraged and welcome to join him if their schedules allow.
 31 Staff have created a template for the Tourism Program’s monthly written report to ensure
 32 consistency in style and content. Jennifer Tavares said she would like the Chamber and CVB to be

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33 more involved in interactions with PDEQ. American Airlines will offer weekly flights from Ithaca
34 Tompkins Regional Airport to Charlotte, North Carolina.

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36 **Room Tax, Q2 2018 Report – Nick Helmholdt**

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38 Room taxes are down slightly from 2017 figures but still ahead of budgeted projection (\$2.75
39 million). Moreover, 2017 was a “banner” year. Scott Wiggins pointed out that County has more
40 rooms on-line, which should be taken into account when considering numbers.

41 B&Bs grew a little but hotel side shrank; the B&B increase probably reflects Airbnb-generated
42 rentals versus traditional B&B occupancies. Nick will follow up on Jennifer’s request to ask County
43 Finance to pull aggregate room tax figures for Airbnb.

44

45 **CVB Monthly Report & Visitor Profile Study Update – Peggy Coleman**

46 The Visitor Profile Study has launched, with 1,200 responses so far in digital study. Partners such
47 as PRI are sharing digital study with their databases. Intercept study needs fine-tuning; visitors
48 seem reticent about sharing their experiences. Intercept will last 12 months, and JLL will give an
49 update in the fall. Visitors Services has seen a 30% increase year after year at Taughannock.
50 Retail is doing well. Sarah in Sales joined the Marketing Committee for Finger Lakes Tourism
51 Alliance. Jonathan graduated from Leadership Tompkins and, along with some CVB hotel partners,
52 attended the Empire State Society of Association Executives trade show in Albany. CVB has
53 invited Capital District alumni from Cornell and Ithaca College to an event in Albany next Tuesday.
54 Peggy will ask JLL to forward link to digital study to Scott Wiggins to share with his database of
55 former guests, per his request.

56

57 **Budget Committee Report – Nick Helmholdt**

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59 Nick gave members an overview of the proposed 2019 budget, pointing out changes implemented
60 since the last STPB meeting. Budget Committee projected \$2.9 million in room taxes for 2019. Of
61 note are the fund balance and policy on reserves and surplus. \$2.4 million is available for product
62 marketing and development. Budget requests from program administrators no longer need to be
63 capped at certain percentages; administrators requested \$2.5 million in funding. New Tourism
64 Initiative (NTI) and Tourism Project (TP) Grants would be consolidated into one category under
65 product development. Discovery Trail would transition from a line item to grant funding in summer
66 2019. Budget committee and other STPB members shared their thoughts on this change in funding
67 allocation. Legislature will vote on budget later this fall. Brett Bossard liked idea of combining
68 NTI/TP Grants but worried the resulting 30 percent reduction in funding would discourage new
69 groups from applying and work against Board’s new intention to attract a more diverse range of
70 applicants. It could also hurt funding for arts and culture, which has been a hot button topic with
71 Legislature. On paper, the CVB will receive biggest increase in funding. However, Kelli explained
72 the County has in reality underfunded them for years. Chamber is unable to pay their staff fair
73 market rates in sync with the level of professional expertise and have no reserves for paying
74 people. Tompkins Center for History and Culture is going to create huge staffing needs, which will
75 only exacerbate the issue. The CVB’s budget proposal is detailed if anyone wants to see it.

76

77 **Action:** Scott Wiggins moved adoption of the 2019 Tourism Program Budget. Ken Jupiter
78 seconded. Motion carried.

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80 **Planning & Evaluation Committee Update – Ken Jupiter**

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82 The members were asked to vote to adopt the STPB Diversity Statement. (As of the July 18th
83 meeting, no further comments on the draft statement had been received by the Committee since
84 the June STPB meeting.)

85
86 **Action:** David Blake made a motion to adopt the STPB Diversity Statement. Brett Bossard
87 seconded. Motion carried.

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89 **Arts & Culture Committee Report – Brett Bossard**

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91 The Committee has been meeting monthly. ACOD funding has been a big topic of discussion.
92 Stephen Nunley joined the Arts and Culture reps at the last meeting. Committee plans to help set
93 clear goals for arts and culture in the upcoming Strategic Tourism Plan, as well as to brainstorm on
94 bigger-picture ways of enhancing arts and culture funding in our area.

95
96 **Strategic Tourism Implementation Grant Review Committee Update– Nick Helmholdt**

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98 The STI Grant Review Committee received a request from the Downtown Ithaca Alliance to fund
99 Phase 2 of the Downtown Conference Center Feasibility Study, which focuses on the Green Street
100 Garage location. The Committee found the request to be of value and recommended funding the
101 project. Gary Ferguson assured the Board members that the trigger will not be pulled on the
102 project until a developer who plans to include a conference center is selected.

103
104 **Action:** David Blake moved to recommend \$42,675 in funding for the DIA’s “Downtown Ithaca
105 Community Conference Center: Phase Two” STI grant application. Stephen Nunley seconded.
106 Motion carried.

107
108 **Presentation: Lime Bikes & Visitors – Hector Chang, Bike Walk Tompkins**

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110 Lime Bike launched here in late April, and 300 bicycles are now distributed throughout the City and
111 Town of Ithaca. Service has expanded, with 25 Lime Bikes in Trumansburg and 50 in Watkins Glen
112 and Montour Falls. An additional 100 new parking spaces for bikes will be created by the end of
113 this summer. The fleet will decrease in the winter. In less than 3 months, more than 34,000 rides,
114 10,000 users, and 25,000 miles have been recorded. Ithaca places in the top 5 Lime Bike markets
115 nationwide. Jeff Goodmark, Lime Bike’s local representative, is the person to contact with any
116 issues that arise. The company has a Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Ithaca, and
117 Bike Walk Tompkins convenes a community oversight committee regularly to assess how things
118 are going. All revenue from the rentals goes to Lime Bike. Lime Bike is also exploring the feasibility
119 of bringing other products to our area, such as electric scooters and e-bikes.

120
121 **Member Announcements**

122 Starting in 2019, Ithaca College will likely switch from hosting seven orientations throughout the
123 summer to one in August. Dates are set for the Ithaca Fantastik Film Festival, which has been
124 receiving nationwide press coverage. Downtown Ithaca Alliance is beginning work on the
125 Downtown 2030 Strategic Plan. There will be a planning session centered around area tourism
126 development and marketing. The Kitchen Theatre is hosting the first Ithaca One Minute Play
127 Festival on Saturday (7/21). Josh Friedman highly recommended the Civic Ensemble’s production
128 of “Fast Blood.” Dogs are welcome at Kilpatrick’s new Yappy Hour on Tuesday evenings. Fifty
129 percent of proceeds will be donated to the Tompkins County SPCA. Open Farms Days will be held
130 the weekend of August 11-12. The Chamber’s Annual Golf Tournament is August 1.

131
132 Chair Kelli Cartmill adjourned the meeting at 4:58pm.