

# Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board

Wednesday, September 25, 2019; 3:00pm – 5:00 pm

**Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce/CVB, 904 East Shore Drive, Ithaca, NY**

<b>AGENDA</b>	<b>Start</b>
1. STPB Meeting Minutes	3:00
• ACTION – Approve July Meeting Minutes	
2. Privilege of the Floor	
• Limit of 3 minutes per person for members of the public to address the board	
3. Chair’s Report – Kelli Cartmill	3:05
4. Staff Report – Nick Helmholdt	3:10
5. CVB Monthly Report – Peggy Coleman	3:20
6. Community Celebration Grant Panel Update – Carol Kammen	3:30
• ACTION – Approve 2019 Fall Community Celebrations Grant Recommendations	
7. Presentation: City Harbor public access – Elizabeth Classen Ambrose	3:40
8. Strategic Tourism Plan Steering Committee Update – Nick Helmholdt	4:20
9. Member Announcements	4:30
10. Adjournment	5:00

## **Agenda Packet**

1. July 2019 Draft STPB Meeting Minutes
2. CVB Monthly report
3. Fall 2019 Community Celebration Grant Memo



MISSION: The Strategic Tourism Planning Board is charged by the Tompkins County Legislature with providing oversight and strategic direction for tourism initiatives that *promote economic development* and *enhance the quality of life* in Tompkins County.

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

1 **Date:** July 17, 2019  
 2 **Time:** 3:00-4:30pm  
 3 **Location:** Tompkins Co. CVB/Chamber of Commerce, 904 E. Shore Drive, Ithaca NY  
 4

5 **Attendees:**

Name	✓	Representation
Brett Bossard	P	Arts-Culture
Kelli Cartmill	P	Lodging
Laura Winter Falk	P	At-Large
Josh Friedman	P	Arts-Culture
Ken Jupiter	P	At-Large
Connie Kan	P	At-Large
Katie Kutz	P	At-Large
Doug Levine	P	Arts-Culture
Rick Manning	P	At-Large
Mike Mellor	P	At-Large
Cara Nichols	E	Ithaca College
Todd Parlato	P	At-Large
Barbara Romano	P	Cornell University
Monika Roth	P	Agriculture
Sue Stafford	E	TC3
Baruch Whitehead	P	Arts-Culture
Scott Wiggins	A	At-Large
Andy Zepp	E	Recreation
<i>Martha Armstrong</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>TCAD, Non-Voting</i>
<i>Peggy Coleman</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Chamber, Non-Voting 7</i>

Name	✓	Representation
<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>John Spence</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>CAP, Non-Voting</i>
<i>Jennifer Tavares</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Chamber, Non-Voting</i>
<i>Matthew Yarrow</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Transportation, 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>A</i>	<i>Associate Member</i>
<i>Henry Granison</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Associate Member</i>
<i>Theresa Hollister-Ball</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Associate Member</i>
<i>Carol Kammen</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>Associate Member</i>
<i>Michael Miller</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Associate Member</i>
<i>Jon Reis</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>Associate Member</i>
<i>Wylie Schwartz</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Associate Member</i>
<i>Nick Helmholdt</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Staff</i>
<i>Kristin McCarthy</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>Staff</i>

8 **Guests:** Paula Younger (on behalf of Cara Nichols), David Walton, Ronda Roaring, Sarah Imes  
 9

10 **Opening Remarks/Changes to the Agenda** – Chair Kelli Cartmill welcomed everyone to the meeting.

11 **Privilege of the Floor** – No comments.

12  
 13 **Action: Approval of the June 19, 2019 STPB Meeting Minutes** – Brett Bossard moved approval of the draft  
 14 June 2019 minutes. Monika Roth seconded. Motion carried.  
 15

16 **Chair's Report – Kelli Cartmill**

17 Kelli added a report by the Strategic Tourism Implementation (STI) Grant Review Committee, along with a  
 18 related request for action, to the meeting agenda.  
 19

20 **STI Grant Review Committee Report and Request for Action on Grant Application – Ken Jupiter**

21 This committee met recently to discuss an STI Grant application submitted by the Convention and Visitors  
 22 Bureau (CVB) for \$33,896 in funding to hire consulting firm Civitas to assist Tompkins County in creating a  
 23 Tourism Investment District (TID). Given that several committee members could not attend the meeting, a  
 24 few other STPB representatives participated in the deliberations, including Laura Winter Falk, Henry  
 25 Granison, and Sue Stafford (via phone).  
 26

27 **Action:** Ken Jupiter made a motion, which Josh Friedman seconded, to recommend that \$33,896 in STI  
 28 Grant funds be awarded to the CVB to hire Civitas to assist with the formation of a TID in downtown Ithaca.

# **Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB)**

## **Draft Meeting Minutes**

29 **Staff Report and Q2 Room Tax Report – Nick Helmholdt**

- 30 • STPB Outdoor Recreation Committee is meeting at 2:00pm on July 25<sup>th</sup> at Finger Lakes Land Trust.
- 31 • Tompkins Center for History and Culture is hosting a donor celebration July 23, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.
- 32 They need to raise about 8%, or \$142,000, to reach goal of \$1,750,000.
- 33 • The Paddle, Pedal & Play Fest has been rescheduled for Saturday, Sept. 14. The board of the Cayuga
- 34 Lake Wine Trail withdrew its request for a Tourism Project Grant for Spring 2019.

35

36 In Q2, \$782,432 in room tax was collected. County is on pace to hit the 2019 room tax budget. There was

37 substantial growth in tax paid by small establishments of 10 or fewer rooms (\$25K).

38

39 **CVB Mid-year Report – Peggy Coleman**

40 Peggy distributed copies of the CVB's Mid-year Report for 2019 and shared highlights with the group. She

41 also introduced David Walton, the bureau's new meeting and conference sales manager, who spoke a few

42 words about his background. In addition, Peggy expressed her appreciation to Michael Miller and the

43 Ithaca Reggae Fest team for the warm welcome they extended to David and his family. Sarah Imes, the

44 CVB's tour and travel manager, was also in attendance.

45

46 **Conference Center Advisory Committee Report & Request for Action – Jennifer Tavares & Gary Ferguson**

47 A resolution expressing STPB support for a conference center in downtown Ithaca was distributed to the

48 group for review and recommendation. It was an addition to the original meeting agenda. Jennifer and

49 Gary gave an overview of the resolution and the reasoning behind the need to pass it.

50

51 **Action:** Brett Bossard made a motion to recommend the passage of an STPB resolution in support of a

52 Downtown Ithaca Community Conference Center. The motion, which was seconded by Ken Jupiter, passed.

53

54 **Budget Committee Report and Request for Action – Kelli Cartmill**

55 Kelli presented the Budget Committee's report on behalf of Scott Wiggins, who could not attend the

56 meeting. Monika Roth expressed her disagreement with the decision to cut funding for the Beautification

57 Program

58

59 **ACTION** – A motion was made by Baruch Whitehead, and seconded by Ken Jupiter, to recommend the 2020

60 Tompkins County Tourism Program Budget for adoption. Motion carried.

61

62 **Guest Presentation – Ronda Roaring**

63 Ronda Roaring, editor of Ilovethefingerlakes.com, gave a slideshow presentation on paddling the

64 waterways of the City of Ithaca.

65

66 **Member Announcements**

67 Members shared news of tourism-related events and other happenings around the County.

68

69 **Strategic Tourism Plan – Focus Area breakout meetings**

70 Members broke into small discussion groups to work on developing the Focus Area sections of the draft

71 2021-2027 Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Plan.

72

73 Chair Kelli Cartmill adjourned the meeting at 4:48 pm.



**September 2019 - CVB Report to the Board**

**Marketing:**

Visit Ithaca launched a 3-month geofencing and retargeting digital campaign with the goal to influence future visitation with offerings of which the visitor is not yet familiar. The campaign was dual-focused and targeted college campuses and Tompkins County accommodations through a geo-fence, while also targeting demographics of outdoor enthusiasts, craft beverage enthusiasts. Resulting in:

302,587 total Impressions

1,395 people clicking through on ads

735 total Click-Through conversions to online travel guide

171 total view through conversions to online travel guide (didn't click through from ad but returned on another device later.

Click-Through rate of .46%, which is 6.59 times the national average of .07%

\*Craft Cider related ads served to visitors reached 4,334 impressions and resulted in the highest average at 1.59%

From May through mid. August we have had over 68,000 pageviews of our online travel guide viewed as a Flipbook on VisitIthaca.com

**Digital –**

The trends revealed in Workshops mid-year report are continuing with overall website pageviews down slightly. August shows us that homepage views and events pageviews are up 24% and 54% respectively, and unique users and sessions are up.

	July	August	YTD
Website VisitIthaca.com			
<b>Unique Users 2019</b>	<b>52,061</b>	<b>50,219</b>	<b>281,118</b>
Unique Users 2018	53,051	46,712	263,031
<b>Sessions 2019</b>	<b>67,140</b>	<b>65,200</b>	<b>378,974</b>
Sessions 2018	68,514	59,367	354,982
<b>Pageviews 2019</b>	<b>157,043</b>	<b>155,724</b>	<b>983,327</b>
Pageviews 2018	216,459	187,940	1,193,248

The Instagram takeover is still going strong with 175 new followers gained in August. We celebrated hitting 26,000 followers on Facebook in August!!

**Agriculinary Tourism –**

The Ithaca Farm to Fork page has seen a 12% increase in visitation in August over July with 3,911 views. The Open Farm Days event listing had 596 views, up over 344% from July, and the webpage had 558 views, up over 262% from July. The Craft Cider page [www.VisitIthaca.com/craft-cider](http://www.VisitIthaca.com/craft-cider) has seen a 77% increase in views over July. We saw a large surge in views as a result of a consumer newsletter focusing on craft cider that went out in August. Year-over-year, Farm to Fork pageviews on the website are up 24%.

## PR & Communications -

We hosted Ariel Brewster on a media tour focusing on family friendly travel. Pitched Open Farm Days resulting in: Western NY Family Magazine Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/WNYFamily/> Website - <http://www.wnyfamilymagazine.com/community/2019-open-farm-days/>

Prep is in full swing for many fall media tours with upcoming visits by the Toronto Sun, Cider Chat podcast producer, an Australian travel writer and more!

Recent media coverage includes:

- **Forbes (UMV: 29.8M)** featured Firelight Camps, Mountain Horse Farm, Seneca Sol, and Plum Point Lodge in its round up of "[Best Glamping Sites in the Northeast.](#)"
- **TravelPulse (UMV: 698K)** piece including La Tourelle Resort & Spa's dog friendly accommodations and amenities in a list of "[Paw'esome Hotels to Celebrate National Dog Day](#)" was syndicated this week to **SmartBrief (UMV: 19.9K)** and **Raising Your Pets Naturally (UMV:**
- Ithaca has been selected as [one of the best cities in the US for musicians!](#) This list is made up of cities that are ideal for musicians for various reasons from their low cost of living, to their legendary music venues, and they all have one thing in common; incredible support for artists and hungry crowds ready for the next big thing.
- The Finger Lakes Region voted [USA Today's America's Best Wine Region](#) for a **second year in a row.**
- **Newsweek (9.3 million UMV)** included Firelight Camps for its s'mores kit offering in a roundup focused on "[National S'mores Day Deals, Giveaways and Freebies.](#)"
- **Reader's Digest (3.5 million UMV)**, listed Firelight Camps in its piece, "[27 Luxury Camping Adventures That Will Make You an Outdoors Person.](#)" The outlet posted its article to **3.1 million Facebook followers.**

CNY Central shared the links from all video stories created while covering Tompkins County this summer: Moog Synthesizer

<https://cnycentral.com/news/your-town/your-town-ithaca-the-moog-synthesizer>

Hip Hop Collection

<https://cnycentral.com/news/your-town/your-town-ithaca-cornell-universitys-expansive-hip-hop-collection>

Cornell Veterinary program

<https://cnycentral.com/news/your-town/your-town-ithaca-cornell-universitys-renowned-veterinary-program>

Chicken Nuggets

<https://cnycentral.com/news/your-town/your-town-ithaca-hometown-of-the-chicken-nugget>

LIVE show

<https://youtu.be/PKN4DCD0wNw>

## Sales:

The sales team continued making site visits to our local meeting partner properties during August. Sarah made a presentation to the Board of Directors at the Travel Alliance Partners (TAP) 2019 Board meeting in Rochester this month. As a result of the CVB participating in RTO Summit, Sarah facilitated contracts between a local hotel partner and receptive tour operator. More contracts are in negotiations currently. Dave continued outreach on campus to solicit higher ed sourced meetings. He is also organizing the Retreat to Ithaca Sales Mission to meeting planners in Albany area, scheduled for September 17-20, 2019. Eight leads were distributed in August for a potential economic impact of \$114,610.

**Visitor Experience:**

The Visitor Experience Department is seeing a 19% increase YTD in touchpoints from 2018 to 2019, with tremendous growth in off-site activations. The team participated in 14 off-site events including resource fairs and parent and/or student panels among the three colleges during August with most taking place the week of student return. Additional events were scheduled into early September and through the remainder of the year.

The Arrival to Departure Tourism Program trained eleven youth through the Workforce Career Center's Youth Employment program. The teens were employed at GIAC, Newfield High School and other entities throughout the community.

By the Numbers:

	August 2019	August 2018	YOY % Change	YTD 2019	YTD 2018	YOY % Change
Phone	216	302	-28	1518	966	+57
ESD Traffic	686	797	-14	2674	2707	-1
DVC Traffic*	991	1279	-22	3059	4382	-30
Taug. Traffic	9304	9634	-3	27049	27625	-2
Chats*	393	423	-7	2045	2593	-21
TG Requests	680	406	+67	4378	3092	+42
Off-Site Events	6529	3600	+81	19041	8620	+121
<b>Total</b>	<b>18799</b>	<b>16441</b>	<b>+13%</b>	<b>59764</b>	<b>49985</b>	<b>+19%</b>

\*2019 Closed DVC for 2 weeks in April due to construction delay at TCHC.

\*No exterior signs on DVC since move to TCHC in April.



**Tompkins County**  
**DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY**

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Katherine Borgella, AICP  
Commissioner of Planning and Sustainability

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[www.tompkinscountyny.gov/planning](http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/planning)

**TO:** Housing and Economic Development Committee, Tompkins County Legislators  
**FROM:** Nick Helmholdt, Principal Planner / Tourism Program Director  
**CC:** Kelli Cartmill, Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB)  
**DATE:** September 18, 2019  
**RE:** **Award of Fall 2019 Community Celebration Grants**

### **ACTION REQUESTED**

Approve Fall 2019 grants in the following categories:

- Community Celebrations – Doc. ID #8895

### **BACKGROUND**

#### Grant Guidelines

Grant guidelines are available to review through the Tourism Program website:

[www.tompkinscountyny.gov/tourism/grants](http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/tourism/grants)

No major changes have been made to the grant guidelines since spring 2013. All applications were collected through the Common Grant Application.

Brief summaries of the grant requests and award recommendations are attached to this memo. Full grant applications and more detailed summaries are available to review upon request. For information on how to access the full grant applications and summary reports available through the online Common Grant Application, please contact Nick Helmholdt.

#### Applications

Nine (9) grant applications were received in this round. Applicants requested \$22,830 in funding from the Community Celebrations grant program. Funding requests exceeded the 2019 Tourism Program budget by \$11,186.

#### Grant Recommendations

Specific award recommendations along with committee comments and explanations are provided in the attached summary charts. Six of the nine Community Celebrations grant applications are recommended for funding.

#### Grant Review Process

Grant review committee members are appointed by the chair of the STPB. The following committee members took part in the Fall 2019 review process:

- Carol Kammen (chair)
- Doug Levine\*
- Susan Currie
- Brett Bossard\*
- Michael Lane

\*denotes voting member of the STPB

The tourism grant review committees used a scoring rubric, which was a valuable guide in the development of grant recommendations. The evaluation criteria for Community Celebrations grants are:

1. Cultural and Historic Value
2. Community Value
3. Ability to Deliver
4. Diversity
5. Sustainability
6. Clarity of Application

## **BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

All Tourism Program grants are funded by hotel room occupancy tax, and funds for these awards are available in the 2019 Tourism Program budget.

The recommended awards allow for a balance of funds to remain unspent. By policy of the STPB, a budget adjustment will be recommended in early 2020 to bring this year's unspent funds into the 2020 budgets for this program. Expected 2019 unspent balances are as follows:

- \$1,162 - Community Celebrations

## **CONTACT**

Nick Helmholdt, Tompkins County Planning Department, 607.274.5560, [nhelmholdt@tompkins-co.org](mailto:nhelmholdt@tompkins-co.org)  
 Carol Kammen, Community Celebrations Committee Chair, 607.273-5298, [ckk6@cornell.edu](mailto:ckk6@cornell.edu)

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- 2019 Fall Community Celebrations Applications - SUMMARY

Organization Name	Celebration Name	Event Start Date	Event End Date	Expected Attendance/ Participation	Amount Requested	Amount Recommended	Review Committee Notes
School for Radiant Living	Winter Solstice 2019	12/21/2019	12/21/2019	300	\$3,000	\$0	Committee does not support funding this event. The committee found the application and budget unclear especially regarding volunteer support. The committee felt that the application felt unfocused.
Ithaca Festival Inc.	Ithaca Festival of the Arts	5/28/2020	5/31/2020	50,000	\$3,000	\$0	Committee supports this request in general, but does not recommend funding it for the fall round. The applicant is advised to reapply in the Spring 2020 grant cycle.
Ithaca Concert Band	A Year of Free Concerts	1/1/2020	12/31/2020	2,500	\$2,000	\$2,000	Committee supports funding this proposal. The committee felt that the group has delivered good results and provided a frugal budget.
Greater Ithaca Activities Center, Inc. (GIAC, Inc.)	GIAC's Martin Luther King Jr. Community Breakfast Celebration & GIAC Black History Month Community Talent Show Celebration	1/18/2020	2/14/2020	1,000	\$3,000	\$2,000	Committee supports this proposal.
Triphammer Arts Inc.	Figures in the Landscape: A Day of Public Art-Making	5/9/2020	5/9/2020	200	\$2,975	\$1,000	Committee supports this proposal which combines arts and agriculture. However members had concerns about the request to use grant funds for insurance and relatively low attendance projection.
Ithaca Children's Garden	Festival of Fire & Ice	2/8/2020	2/8/2020	800	\$2,000	\$2,000	Committee recommends funding this event. Members were especially impressed with outreach efforts to West Village community.
WEAVE Community Inc.	How Did We Get Here?	11/1/2019	11/24/2019	400	\$2,855	\$0	Committee does not recommend funding this proposal. Members were enthusiastic about the concept but concerned about execution due to the short timeframe and lack of event planning details. The committee encourages further refinement of this idea by working with experts on history of immigration in our community.
Dorothy Cotton Jubilee Singers, Inc.	2020 Community Martin Luther King Celebration	1/23/2020	1/23/2020	650	\$3,000	\$2,500	Committee supports funding this proposal. One member abstained due to a conflict of interest.
Groton Recreation	Groton Cabin Fever Festival	3/7/2020	3/7/2020	500	\$1,000	\$1,000	Committee supports this proposal.
				Total	\$22,830	\$10,500	
				Available	\$11,662	\$11,662	
				Difference	-\$11,168	\$1,162	