

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

1 **Date:** August 19, 2020  
 2 **Time:** 3:00-5:00pm  
 3 **Location:** Virtual Meeting – Zoom Video Conference  
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5 **Attendees:**

Name	✓	Representation
Brett Bossard	P	Arts-Culture
Kelli Cartmill	P	Lodging
Laura Winter Falk	P	At-Large
Josh Friedman	P	Arts-Culture
Connie Kan	E	At-Large
VACANT	N/A	Lodging
Doug Levine	P	Arts-Culture
Kelly Makosch	P	At-Large
Rick Manning	P	At-Large
Erin Martea	P	At-Large
Greg Mezey	P	At-Large
VACANT	N/A	Ithaca College
Todd Parlato	E	At-Large
Barbara Romano	A	Cornell University
Monika Roth	E	Agriculture
Deb Mohlenhoff	E	TC3
Steven Stull	P	Arts-Culture
Scott Wiggins	A	At-Large

Name	✓	Representation
Megan Barber	P	CAP, Non-Voting
Peggy Coleman	P	Chamber, Non-Voting
Gary Ferguson	P	DIA, Non-Voting
Anna Kelles	P	TC Legislature, Non-Voting
Heather McDaniel	P	TCAD, Non-Voting
Jennifer Tavares	P	Chamber, Non-Voting
Scot Vanderpool	A	Transportation, Non-Voting
Jim Brophy	A	Associate Member
Erica Frenay	A	Associate Member
Henry Granison	P	Associate Member
Ken Jupiter	E	Associate Member
Carol Kammen	A	Associate Member
Michael Miller	P	Associate Member
Jon Reis	P	Associate Member
Wylie Schwartz	P	Associate Member
Nick Helmholtz	P	TP Director
Kristin McCarthy	P	TCDPS

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8 **Guests:** Tom Knipe, Graham Savio, Kate Borgella, Kurt Anderson  
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10 **Opening Remarks/Changes to the Agenda** – Chair Kelli Cartmill welcomed everyone to the meeting.

11 **Privilege of the Floor** – None

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 13 **Chair’s Report – Kelli Cartmill** – Kelli gave update on board vacancies and Cara Nichols departure from  
 14 Ithaca College and thus the STPB. She also reported that members are needed for the Membership and  
 15 Bylaws Committee Interested parties should reach out to Nick Helmholtz. Last, she provided a quick  
 16 temperature check on our local tourism industry – numbers are down, including Airbnb rentals.  
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18 **Action: Approval of July 2020 STPB Meeting Minutes** – Brett Bossard moved approval of the draft July 15,  
 19 2020 minutes. Josh Friedman seconded the motion, which was passed by members present.  
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21 **Planning & Evaluation Committee Update – Josh Friedman**

22 Josh led the group in a discussion of the proposal to recommend modifications to the county’s room tax  
 23 law, using the memo included in the agenda packet as the guiding document. This memo proposes that the  
 24 STPB recommend that the County Legislature repeal a section of the Tompkins County Hotel Room  
 25 Occupancy Tax Local Law which limits “bed and breakfast inns” to a tax rate of 3%. The repeal of this  
 26 exemption would establish a consistent room tax for all lodging establishments within Tompkins County of  
 27 5%. Josh instructed that a slight change be made to the language in the memo to incorporate the term  
 28 “small lodging properties.” Several members expressed the opinion that while the lower tax rate originally  
 29 negotiated for bed-and-breakfasts and short term rentals once served a purpose as an incentive, it was  
 30 now time to level the playing field and increase revenue as that sector has seen strong growth. Kelli

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31 reminded everyone that this issue has been on the board's radar for the last couple of years and is not just  
32 a response to the coronavirus pandemic. Wylie Schwartz argued for more advocacy and support for short  
33 term rental owners if the tax rate increases. Brett echoed Wylie's concerns and saw this change as a  
34 potential to do more outreach to the Airbnb sector in our community. Along those lines, Greg Mezey  
35 pondered whether it would make sense to have a short term rental seat on the board. Kelli added she  
36 thought a larger discussion on the board's composition was warranted. Anna Kelles commented that  
37 Tompkins is the only county in New York State to tax Airbnb at a lower rate, and guest Tom Knipe added  
38 that the new tax rate would likely need to be negotiated with Airbnb as part of its room tax agreement  
39 with Tompkins County.

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41 **Action:** Erin Martea made a motion, which Steven Stull seconded, to recommend modifications to the  
42 Hotel Room Occupancy Tax Local Law. Motion carried by members present.

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### **Budget Committee Update – Josh Friedman and Nick Helmholdt**

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46 Josh provided an overview of how the committee came to its determination regarding the composition of  
47 the proposed 2021 Tourism Program budget. Priorities included maintaining program assets with  
48 decreased funding for all line items. It was important that core components like the CVB, DIA, and TCAD,  
49 along with ACOD partners, be in a strong position after the coronavirus pandemic subsidies. It was difficult  
50 to cut grant programs and event funding but necessary given the pending 50% reduction in budget.

51 Nick provided details on the four revenue models provided. Most organizations saw a 30% reduction.  
52 Discussion covered various factors, including history of 60/40 split, particularly in regards to CVB, outdoor  
53 recreation, and arts and culture budgets; reserve balance, and tourism capital grants.

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55 **Action:** A motion by Brett Bossard, and seconded by Josh Friedman, was made to recommend the 2021  
56 Tourism Program budget. Steven Stull opposed. Motion carried. No abstentions.

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### **Staff Report – Nick Helmholdt**

58 Nick updated the group on recent Tourism Program activities, in particularly drawing to their attention the  
59 document detailing diversity and inclusion resources that was included in the agenda packet. Several STPB  
60 members have expressed interest in joining a task force on this matter. He reiterated the need for  
61 volunteers for the Membership & Bylaws Committee to help with board recruitment. Greg Mezey, Doug  
62 Levine, and Laura Winter Falk agreed to join. He also shared that NYSDOT has listed its waterfront site for  
63 public auction.

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### **CVB Update – Peggy Coleman**

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66 Peggy reported on the latest happenings at the CVB. In the very good news department, Experience the  
67 Finger Lakes was ranked as one of the top 10 wine tour companies in the country by USA Today. Peggy  
68 and the CVB are collaborating with Laura Winter Falk to draft a media release and will be promoting the  
69 award through their social media platforms.

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### **Higher Education Reactivation Plan Updates**

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72 No report was given because none of the higher education representatives were at the meeting. Ithaca  
73 College announced they are switching to a virtual fall semester.

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### **Conference Center Update – Gary Ferguson**

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76 Gary Ferguson updated group about developments with the downtown community conference center.  
77 Sara Hayes has been brought onboard as the project manager, and DIA is collaborating with consultants  
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79 Cini Little, as well as the Vecino Group, for help with kitchen design. An RfP for a conference center will  
80 hopefully go out in the coming weeks. Discussion covered topics including hiring local workers, requiring  
81 living wage employment as a prerequisite, forecasting for meetings and conferences industry in general,  
82 state funding, HVAC concerns, City Occupancy Tax Bill, and the project execution deadline.

83  
84 **Member Announcements** –Members shared recent news and events of interest with the group.

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86 Chair Kelli Cartmill adjourned the meeting at 4:53pm.

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