

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

1 **Date:** January 21, 2021
 2 **Time:** 3:00-5:00pm
 3 **Location:** Virtual Meeting – Zoom Video Conference

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 5 **Attendees:**

Member		Representation	Member		Representation
Brett Bossard	P	Arts-Culture	<i>Megan Barber</i>	P	<i>CAP, Non-Voting</i>
Kelli Cartmill	P	Lodging	<i>Peggy Coleman</i>	P	<i>Chamber, Non-Voting</i>
Laura Winter Falk	P	At-Large	<i>Gary Ferguson</i>	P	<i>DIA, Non-Voting</i>
Josh Friedman	P	Arts-Culture	<i>TK</i>	N/A	<i>TC Legislature, Non-Voting</i>
Connie Kan	P	At-Large	<i>Heather McDaniel</i>	E	<i>TCAD, Non-Voting</i>
Arthur Keith	P	Lodging	<i>Jennifer Tavares</i>	P	<i>Chamber, Non-Voting</i>
Wendy Kobler	P	Ithaca College	<i>Vacant</i>	N/A	<i>Transportation, Non-Voting</i>
Doug Levine	P	Arts-Culture	<i>Jim Brophy</i>	A	<i>Associate Member</i>
Kelly Makosch	E	Recreation	<i>Erica Frenay</i>	P	<i>Associate Member</i>
Rick Manning	E	At-Large	<i>Henry Granison</i>	P	<i>Associate Member</i>
Erin Marteau	P	At-Large	<i>Ken Jupiter</i>	P	<i>Associate Member</i>
Greg Mezey	P	At-Large	<i>Carol Kammen</i>	A	<i>Associate Member</i>
Todd Parlato	P	At-Large	<i>Michael Miller</i>	P	<i>Associate Member</i>
Barbara Romano	P	Cornell University	<i>Jon Reis</i>	P	<i>Associate Member</i>
Monika Roth	P	Agriculture	<i>Wylie Schwartz</i>	E	<i>Associate Member</i>
Deb Mohlenhoff	P	TC3	<i>Nick Helmholt</i>	P	<i>Tourism Program Director</i>
Steven Stull	P	Arts-Culture	<i>Kristin McCarthy</i>	P	<i>TCDPS</i>
Scott Wiggins	A	At-Large			

7 **Guests:** Mila Fournier

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 9 **Opening Remarks/Changes to the Agenda** – Chair Kelli Cartmill welcomed everyone to the meeting. No
 10 changes to the agenda.

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 12 **Action: Approval of December 2020 STPB Meeting Minutes** – Josh Friedman moved approval of the draft
 13 December 2020 minutes. Steven Stull seconded the motion. Motion carried.

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 15 **Privilege of the Floor** – None

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 17 **Oath of Office** – Alanna Congdon, Deputy County Clerk
 18 Alanna administered the oath of office virtually to new members and members who renewed their terms as
 19 of Jan. 1, 2021. The relevant paperwork will be filed with the Tompkins County Clerk’s Office via LaserFiche
 20 in the days following the meeting.

21
 22 **Chair Report – Kelli Cartmill**
 23 To start off the new year, Kelli wanted to remind everyone of the board’s overarching mission to provide
 24 oversight and strategic direction for tourism initiatives that promote economic development and enhance
 25 quality of life in Tompkins County. As she pointed out, given the economic downturn from the pandemic,
 26 a huge boost to the quality of life here would be getting people in the tourism sector back to work. To that
 27 end, she is forming a Tourism Recovery Committee and will be reaching out to STPB members and

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28 colleagues in the community about joining. Goal of this working group will be to identify immediate short-
29 term actions we can take to get tourism industry moving again. She asked members to sign up for
30 committees as soon as possible and announced that a Diversity & Inclusion Committee is forming.

31

Staff Report & Q4 Room Tax Report – Nick Helmholdt

32 Nick reviewed highlights from the 2020 fourth-quarter room tax report, which showed just over \$289,000
33 in room taxes collected. This amount was substantially lower than the original amount forecast (\$805,000)
34 as well as the revised amount put forth last spring (\$665,000). However, the County was still able to fulfill
35 all fourth-quarter payments to Tourism Program partners, including the Convention & Visitors Bureau,
36 Downtown Ithaca Alliance, and Community Arts Partnership, among others. In total County collected \$1.2
37 million in room taxes, which is roughly 58% lower than the amount collected in 2019. Nick also shared that
38 the County Legislature voted to eliminate the exemption in the local law that capped room tax at 3% for
39 small lodging properties (10 or fewer rooms). The new law will go into effect March 1. In addition, 18
40 organizations have applied for ACOD funding. The grant review committee is currently reviewing
41 applications and will report to the full board in February. Martha Robertson will chair the Housing and
42 Economic Development Committee. She announced that it will be her last year on the Legislature as she is
43 not running for re-election. In closing, Nick reminded everyone to submit their Conflict of Interest form.

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CVB Q4 Report – Peggy Coleman

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46 Peggy gave an overview of the CVB's fourth-quarter report for 2020, a copy of which was included in the
47 agenda packet. Peggy shared how hard her team has been working over the past year and how committed
48 they are to promoting tourism in our community. Paid advertising was paused this year due to pandemic-
49 induced budget constraints, but her sales team have worked creatively to leverage opportunities. Web
50 stats show the CVB site has outperformed current industry standards. More details can be found in report.

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Presentation: Conference Center Update – Gary Ferguson and Peggy Coleman

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53 Gary and Peggy brought group up to date on latest developments with the Ithaca Downtown Community
54 Conference Center project. Gary shared that tonight (Jan. 21) the City of Ithaca Planning and Economic
55 Development Committee will be holding a public hearing on the Disposition and Development Agreement
56 for the proposed site as well as voting on the adoption of the citywide Hotel Room Occupancy Tax, which
57 would add a 5% charge to help fund conference center operations. Gary emphasized that the conference
58 center is not a standalone project but part of the larger Green Street Garage redevelopment plan, which
59 encompasses ground-level retail, a mix of market-rate and affordable housing, and parking. Their
60 presentation featured renderings of the center, including street scene perspectives and details on the
61 meeting facilities and storage and office space. Construction is supposed to start this spring, with first
62 phase being demolition of western section of the garage. Plan is to have parking portion of project finished
63 by next fall. Construction of principal site is scheduled to begin next fall and end in spring 2024. A nonprofit
64 entity called the Downtown Ithaca Local Development Corporation will own the lease for the facility. It has
65 a board of directors and a fiscal oversight board. ASM Global will manage operations for the center.

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68 **Member Announcements** – Members shared news and events of interest. These included the passing of
69 Percy Browning, who was a major supporter of many of the arts organizations in town, especially the
70 Kitchen Theatre; the return of Cornell University and Ithaca College students for spring term; plans for a
71 socially distant and otherwise COVID-19 safe Ithaca Loves Teacher Celebration and Downtown Ithaca Chili
72 Cook-off; the Save Our Stages Act; Cinemapolis' plans to open for private screenings sometime in February;
73 and the Save Your Seat campaign at the State Theatre, which Doug shared has officially sold out.

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75 Chair Kelli Cartmill adjourned the meeting at 4:16 pm.

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