

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

1 **Date:** April 20, 2022  
 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	Steven Stull	P	Arts-Culture
Kelli Cartmill	P	Lodging	Marian Levy Wilson	P	At-Large
Laura Winter Falk	E	At-Large	Megan Barber	P	CAP, Non-Voting
Josh Friedman	P	Arts-Culture	Peggy Coleman	P	Chamber, Non-Voting
Alexis Zaharis Grimm	P	Lodging	Gary Ferguson	P	DIA, Non-Voting
Ken Jupiter	P	At-Large	Henry Granison	E	TC Legislature, Non-Voting
Vacant		At-Large	Heather McDaniel	E	Ithaca Area Economic Development
Wendy Kobler	P	Ithaca College	Jennifer Tavares	P	Chamber, Non-Voting
Doug Levine	P	Arts-Culture	Patty Poist	P	Transportation, Non-Voting
Kelly Makosch	P	Recreation	Carol Kammen	A	Associate Member
Rick Manning	P	At-Large	Michael Miller	P	Associate Member
Greg Mezey	P	At-Large	Jon Reis	A	Associate Member
Vacant		At-Large	Chuck Tauck	E	Associate Member
Barbara Romano	P	Cornell University	Wylie Schwartz	P	Associate Member
Monika Roth	P	Agriculture	Nick Helmholtz	P	Tourism Program Director
Deb Mohlenhoff	P	TC3	Kristin McCarthy	P	TCDPS

6 **Guests:** Teri Tarsus, Jeremiah Swain, Rosemary Avila

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8 **Opening Remarks/Changes to the Agenda/Privilege of the Floor** – Brett welcomed everyone. No changes  
 9 to agenda and no one spoke during privilege of the floor.

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11 **Action: Approval of March 2022 STPB Meeting Minutes** – The draft March minutes were approved as  
 12 submitted (motion by Marian Levy Wilson, seconded by Steven Stull).

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14 **Chair's Report – Brett Bossard**

15 Brett apologized for our mercurial upstate NY spring weather, which spoiled plans for a meeting outdoors.

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17 **Staff Report/Q1 2022 Room Tax Report – Nick Helmholtz**

18 Tompkins Festivals program is hosting event planning workshops this week and next, and City of Ithaca staff  
 19 requested short-term rental data as they are exploring developing a short-term rental policy. The May STPB  
 20 meeting will start at 2:30pm for diversity, equity, and inclusion training. Room tax collections for properties  
 21 with 10 or fewer rooms continue to grow, while collections for larger properties were lower than historical  
 22 averages. Nearly one-third of sales in first quarter were tax exempt, due in part most likely to omicron  
 23 variant leading to reduced travel demand and quarantine stays. Nick referenced increase in room tax rate  
 24 from 3% to 5% for all properties. Staffing at area hotels continues to be an issue. Nick also provided a brief  
 25 overview of projected 2022 budget, which will be presented in more detail next month. Discussion covered  
 26 budget modeling, room tax payment delinquency, short-term rental legislation on state level, sales tax  
 27 payments, and number of rooms countywide.

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

30 **Update: Downtown Ambassadors Program – Olivia Pastella, Downtown Ithaca Alliance**

31 Olivia reported on the Downtown Ambassadors Program, which includes the Downtown Clean Team and  
32 Downtown Hospitality Ambassador Team. Operated in collaboration with the City of Ithaca and Cornell  
33 Cooperative Extension Tompkins County as part of the latter's Beautification Program, it serves visitors and  
34 is inspired by tourism best practices. Her presentation covered various topics, including partnerships with  
35 other local groups like CVB, TCAT, Youth Employment Services, Community Outreach Worker Program, and  
36 downtown property owners and businesses; duties of the two teams, which provide services such as  
37 supplemental cleaning of downtown area and planter maintenance on Commons and elsewhere; on-street  
38 concierge service, referrals to downtown visitors center, and more. Olivia will be working with a New Roots  
39 student on a beautification internship, and recruitment has started for the summer team.

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41 **Downtown Ithaca Conference Center – Gary Ferguson, Downtown Ithaca Alliance**

42 Gary shared background on the conference center project, which has its roots in conversations dating back  
43 as early as 2002 with a feasibility study done for the site of the Cornell Center/Hilton Garden. He then gave  
44 an overview of the process, which included an RfP with Hunden Strategic Partners and formation of a  
45 working group and then the lower development corporation. A lot of thought was put into funding  
46 strategies for the project and how financing would be backstopped. Currently, project team is finalizing  
47 retail component, construction and design, and budgeting issues.

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49 **Membership & Bylaws Committee – Doug Levine**

50 Doug shared some background information on the two candidates up for appointment to the STPB,  
51 Jeremiah Swain and Teri Tarsus and a few takeaways from their interviews. Members asked about the  
52 recruitment process and seat terms.

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54 **Action:** Doug Levine made a motion, which Deb Mohlenhoff seconded, to recommend Jeremiah Swain and  
55 Teri Tarsus for appointment to the Strategic Tourism Planning Board as at-large members. Motion carried.

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57 **Report/Action: Outdoor Grant Review Committee – Monika Roth**

58 On behalf of the committee, Monika shared their recommendations for the inaugural round of the  
59 Tompkins Outdoors Grant, which stems from the Strategic Tourism Plan and Outdoor Recreation Tourism  
60 Implementation Plan. Ten organizations were invited to submit full applications, with grant requests  
61 totaling \$119,963 for a funding pot of \$50,000. Applicants not chosen for funding had not demonstrated  
62 the tourism impact of proposed projects in the committee's eyes. Common threads in applications included  
63 increased accessibility to outdoor recreation assets, trail improvements, and establishing new connections  
64 between popular outdoor tourism sites (e.g., Discover Cayuga Lake cruises to Taughannock State Park from  
65 downtown Ithaca).

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67 **Action:** Monika Roth made a motion, seconded by Ken Jupiter to recommend the 2022 Tompkins Outdoors  
68 grant awards be approved for funding. Motion carried with Kelly Makosch and Rick Manning abstaining.

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70 **Member Announcements** – Group shared news about events and other happenings. These included Ithaca  
71 Reggae Fest, CAP Celebration of the Arts, Spring Writes Literary Festival, movies at the State Theatre and  
72 Cinemapolis, I Love My Parks Day, NYS Special Olympics, Trumansburg and Ithaca Farmers Markets,  
73 agriculinary tourism grants, and Earth Day celebrations.

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75 **Adjournment** – Chair Brett Bossard adjourned the meeting at 4:32pm.