

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

1 **Date:** March 20, 2024
 2 **Time:** 3:00-4:30pm
 3 **Location:** Canopy Hotel (24 E. State St)/Via Zoom
 4

5 **Attendees:**

Member		Representation	Member		Representation
Brett Bossard	P	Arts-Culture	Steven Stull	P	Arts-Culture
Laura Winter Falk	P	At-Large	Teri Tarshus	P	At-Large
Richard Floyd	P	TC3	<i>Megan Barber</i>	P	<i>CAP, Non-Voting</i>
Jeff Golden	P	Ithaca College	Peggy Coleman	P	Chamber, Non-Voting
Alexis Zaharis Grimm	P	Lodging	<i>Heather McDaniel</i>	E	<i>IAED, Non-Voting</i>
Ken Jupiter	P	At-Large	<i>Frank Doldo</i>	P	<i>Transportation, Non-Voting</i>
Jenna Kain	P	Lodging	<i>Nan Rohrer</i>	P	<i>DIA, Non-Voting</i>
Doug Levine	P	Arts-Culture	<i>Mike Sigler</i>	A	<i>TC Legislature, Non-Voting</i>
Marian Levy Ware	P	At-Large	<i>Jennifer Tavares</i>	P	<i>Chamber, Non-Voting</i>
Kelly Makosch	P	Recreation	<i>Michael Miller</i>	A	<i>Associate Member</i>
Rick Manning	P	At-Large	<i>Jon Reis</i>	E	<i>Associate Member</i>
Greg Mezey	P	At-Large	<i>Chuck Tauck</i>	P	<i>Associate Member</i>
Bethany Parisi	E	Arts-Culture	Nick Helmholtz	P	Tourism Program Director
Barbara Romano	E	Cornell University	Kristin McCarthy	P	County Staff
Monika Roth	P	Agriculture			

6 **Guests:** Chris Stephany, Andy Zepp
 7

8 **Opening Remarks/Changes to the Agenda/Privilege of the Floor** – Chair Brett Bossard started the meeting
 9 at 3:05pm. There were no privilege of the floor requests.
 10

11 **Action: Approval of February 2024 STPB Draft Minutes** – The draft February 2024 minutes were approved
 12 (moved by Steven Stull, seconded by Teri Tarsus) with one minor edit. Motion carried.
 13

14 **Chair's Report** – *Brett Bossard*

15 Brett noted that today's agenda and next month's will be full, with reports from grant committees and
 16 other items of interest. He also briefly reported on the draft City of Ithaca Downtown Plan. Nan Rohrer
 17 provided a more detailed overview, and the plan will be distributed for feedback. She also outlined
 18 outreach initiatives, including an open house scheduled for early May. Jennifer Tavares shared that there
 19 will be a presentation on the plan tat the Tompkins Chamber 2024 Economic Summit. Last, Brett welcomed
 20 Frank Doldo as the new transportation representative for STPB.
 21

22 **Staff Report** – *Nick Helmholtz*

23 Nick provided highlights from his staff report. These included updates on new STPB member
 24 appointments, the progress of a budget adjustment resolution, the status of Spring 2024 tourism grants,
 25 the development of an online payment portal for hotel room occupancy tax, and the launch of the Visitor
 26 Profile Study questionnaire.
 27

28 **Presentation: Wayfinding Implementation** – *Jennifer Tavares*

29 Jennifer Tavares updated the board on the status of the Tompkins County Wayfinding Signage Project,
 30 which includes a comprehensive assessment of existing signage and proposals for new designs. The project
 31 timeline and budget have been adjusted, with additional funding secured. Discussions with NYSDOT

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32 focused on design guidelines and permitting, with NYSDOT preferring simple text and arrows on signs.
33 Sample sign designs were shared, and the team is finalizing maps for proposed locations while working on
34 a detailed budget. The project aims to enhance wayfinding for visitors and residents throughout the
35 county. Further discussions explored integrating digital wayfinding options and addressing potential
36 conflicts between the signage plan and GPS navigation apps.
37

38 **Presentation: Finger Lakes Land Trust – Andy Zepp**

39 Executive director Andy Zepp gave an overview of the current work of the FLX Land Trust and its ongoing
40 conservation efforts across 12 counties. The presentation highlighted several local projects, including the
41 development of a kayak station and public access improvements at Bell Station, as well as work on the
42 Cayuga Cliffs Preserve with a new access point and parking. Andy’s presentation and the Q&A touched on
43 multiple topics. These included the Emerald Necklace, trailhead acquisitions, phosphorus runoff, storm
44 erosion, improving accessibility at preserves, sustainable land management, urban green space
45 development, wineries and the landscape, and indigenous land repatriation.
46

47 **Report/Action: Spring 2024 Community Celebrations Grant Awards – Doug Levine**

48 Doug provided an overview of the applications received, which had increased substantially in comparison to
49 submissions from the past few grant cycles. He also shared highlights from the committee’s decision-
50 making process.
51

52 **Action:** Doug Levine made a motion, which Alexis Zaharis Grimm seconded, to recommend the 2024 Spring
53 Community Celebrations grant awards be approved for funding. Motion carried by members present, with
54 Doug Levine and Steven Stull abstaining.
55

56 **Report/Action: Spring 2024 Tourism Advancement Grant Awards – Nick Helmholdt**

57 Nick gave an overview of the applications submitted for this round, which were numerous and exceeded
58 the available funding. He thanked the members of the committee for their service. Group discussed Cherry
59 Arts project.
60

61 **Action:** Teri Tarshus made a motion, which Ken Jupiter seconded, to recommend the Spring 2024 Tourism
62 Advancement grant awards be approved for funding. Motion carried, with Brett Bossard and Steven Stull
63 abstaining.
64

65 **Report/Action: 2024 Tompkins Outdoors Grant Awards – Alexis Zaharis Grimm**

66 Alexis gave an overview of the Tompkins Outdoors grant program, summarizing the applications submitted
67 in this round, and thanking her fellow committee members for their service.
68

69 **Action:** Alexis Zaharis Grimm made a motion, which Steven Stull seconded, to recommend the Spring 2024
70 Tompkins Outdoors grant awards be approved for funding. Motion carried, with Rick Manning abstaining.
71

72 **Report/Action: Planning & Evaluation Committee – Ken Jupiter**

73 On behalf of the P&E committee, Ken reported on two resolutions in support of bills pending in the NYS
74 Legislature. The County Legislature has written resolutions of support as well.
75

76 **Action:** Ken Jupiter made a motion, which Teri Tarshus seconded, to approve a resolution urging the NYS
77 Legislature and Governor Kathy Hochul to restore funding to the Tourism Matching Grants Program in the
78 final SFY 2025 State Budget. Motion carried.
79

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80 **Action:** Ken Jupiter made a motion, which Steven Stull seconded, to approve a resolution supporting
81 proposals to modernize NYS sales tax laws to include the vacation rental industry and to ensure these
82 changes are appropriately tailored for the needs of localities. Motion carried.

83

84 **Member Announcements**

85 Members shared items of interest related to Cayuga Chamber Orchestra, Chamber Economic Summit,
86 Kitchen Theatre, Ithaca Farmers Market, the April 8 solar eclipse, and more.

87

88 **Adjournment** – Chair Brett Bossard adjourned the meeting at 4:33pm.