

Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board

Wednesday, September 26, 2018; 3:00pm – 4:30pm

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

AGENDA	Start
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 Mid-Year Report + Visitor Profile Study Update – Peggy Coleman	3:15
6. Membership & Bylaws Committee Report – David Blake	3:40
7. Planning & Evaluation Committee Update – Ken Jupiter	3:50
8. Conference Center Working Group Update – Gary Ferguson	4:00
9. Arts & Culture Committee Report – Baruch Whitehead	4:10
10. Member Announcements	4:20
11. Adjournment	4:30

Agenda Packet

1. July 2018 draft STPB meeting minutes
2. CVB Mid-Year Report
3. Summary of Fall Grant Applications Received (Community Celebrations, New Tourism Initiatives)



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 – July 18th, 2018**

1 **Date:** July 18, 2018
 2 **Time:** 3:00-4:30pm
 3 **Location:** La Tourelle, Ithaca, NY 14850
 4

5 **Attendees:**

Name	✓	Representation	Name	✓	Representation
David Blake	P	At-Large	Martha Armstrong	P	TCAD, Non-Voting
Brett Bossard	P	Arts-Culture	Peggy Coleman	P	Chamber, Non-Voting
Kelli Cartmill	P	Lodging	Gary Ferguson	P	DIA, Non-Voting
Josh Friedman	P	Arts-Culture	Anna Kelles	A	TC Legislature, Non-Voting
Steve Hugo	A	At-Large	Dwight Mengel	A	Transportation, Non-Voting
Ken Jupiter	P	At-Large	John Spence	E	CAP, Non-Voting
Anne Kellerman	P	At-Large	Jennifer Tavares	P	Chamber, Non-Voting
Doug Levine	P	Arts-Culture	Ethan Ash	A	Associate Member
Mike Mellor	P	At-Large	Jim Brophy	A	Associate Member
Cara Nichols	P	Ithaca College	Erica Frenay	E	Associate Member
Stephen Nunley	P	At-Large	Carol Kammen	A	Associate Member
Barbara Romano	P	Cornell University	Jon Reis	P	Associate Member
Monika Roth	P	Agriculture	Nick Helmholdt	P	Staff
Sue Stafford	E	TC3	Kristin McCarthy	P	Staff
Katie Kutz	P	Lodging			
Baruch Whitehead	E	Arts-Culture			
Scott Wiggins	P	At-Large			
Andy Zepp	P	Recreation			

7
 8 **Guests:** Ronda Roaring, Georgia Lesh (PRI), Hector Chang & Victoria Armstrong (Bike Walk
 9 Tompkins)

10
 11 Chair Kelli Cartmill called the meeting to order at 3:05 pm.

12
 13 **Opening Remarks/Changes to the Agenda** – Kelli welcomed everyone. Later in the meeting,
 14 the Board voted on the Downtown Ithaca Alliance’s application for a Strategic Tourism Initiative
 15 grant to fund Phase 2 of the Downtown Conference Center Feasibility Study, which was a change
 16 to the agenda.

17 **Approval of the June 20, 2018 STPB Meeting Minutes**

18 **Action:** Anne Kellerman moved to approve the June 2018 minutes. Brett Bossard seconded.
 19 Motion carried.

20 **Privilege of the Floor** – Star Bressler, executive director of the Discovery Trail, shared that
 21 organization’s perspective on how changes contained within the proposed 2019 County Tourism
 22 Program budget would negatively impact their operations. Ronda Roaring spoke about her
 23 experience attending the Finger Lakes International Dragon Boat Festival at Taughannock.

24 **Chair’s Report – Kelli Cartmill**

25 Kelli welcomed Katie Kutz, the Board’s new Lodging representative, to the meeting.

26 **Staff Report – Nick Helmholdt**

27 Applications for the 2018 Fall Tourism Grant round are due September 11th, with funding available
 28 for Community Celebration and New Tourism Initiative grants. A grant application workshop is
 29 scheduled for August 21st at the Tompkins County Public Library. Nick attends monthly PDEQ
 30 meetings, and STPB members are encouraged and welcome to join him if their schedules allow.
 31 Staff have created a template for the Tourism Program’s monthly written report to ensure
 32 consistency in style and content. Jennifer Tavares said she would like the Chamber and CVB to be

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33 more involved in interactions with PDEQ. American Airlines will offer weekly flights from Ithaca
34 Tompkins Regional Airport to Charlotte, North Carolina.

35
36 **Room Tax, Q2 2018 Report – Nick Helmholdt**

37
38 Room taxes are down slightly from 2017 figures but still ahead of budgeted projection (\$2.75
39 million). Moreover, 2017 was a “banner” year. Scott Wiggins pointed out that County has more
40 rooms on-line, which should be taken into account when considering numbers.
41 B&Bs grew a little but hotel side shrank; the B&B increase probably reflects Airbnb-generated
42 rentals versus traditional B&B occupancies. Nick will follow up on Jennifer’s request to ask County
43 Finance to pull aggregate room tax figures for Airbnb.

44
45 **CVB Monthly Report & Visitor Profile Study Update – Peggy Coleman**

46 The Visitor Profile Study has launched, with 1,200 responses so far in digital study. Partners such
47 as PRI are sharing digital study with their databases. Intercept study needs fine-tuning; visitors
48 seem reticent about sharing their experiences. Intercept will last 12 months, and JLL will give an
49 update in the fall. Visitors Services has seen a 30% increase year after year at Taughannock.
50 Retail is doing well. Sarah in Sales joined the Marketing Committee for Finger Lakes Tourism
51 Alliance. Jonathan graduated from Leadership Tompkins and, along with some CVB hotel partners,
52 attended the Empire State Society of Association Executives trade show in Albany. CVB has
53 invited Capital District alumni from Cornell and Ithaca College to an event in Albany next Tuesday.
54 Peggy will ask JLL to forward link to digital study to Scott Wiggins to share with his database of
55 former guests, per his request.

56
57 **Budget Committee Report – Nick Helmholdt**

58
59 Nick gave members an overview of the proposed 2019 budget, pointing out changes implemented
60 since the last STPB meeting. Budget Committee projected \$2.9 million in room taxes for 2019. Of
61 note are the fund balance and policy on reserves and surplus. \$2.4 million is available for product
62 marketing and development. Budget requests from program administrators no longer need to be
63 capped at certain percentages; administrators requested \$2.5 million in funding. New Tourism
64 Initiative (NTI) and Tourism Project (TP) Grants would be consolidated into one category under
65 product development. Discovery Trail would transition from a line item to grant funding in summer
66 2019. Budget committee and other STPB members shared their thoughts on this change in funding
67 allocation. Legislature will vote on budget later this fall. Brett Bossard liked idea of combining
68 NTI/TP Grants but worried the resulting 30 percent reduction in funding would discourage new
69 groups from applying and work against Board’s new intention to attract a more diverse range of
70 applicants. It could also hurt funding for arts and culture, which has been a hot button topic with
71 Legislature. On paper, the CVB will receive biggest increase in funding. However, Kelli explained
72 the County has in reality underfunded them for years. Chamber is unable to pay their staff fair
73 market rates in sync with the level of professional expertise and have no reserves for paying
74 people. Tompkins Center for History and Culture is going to create huge staffing needs, which will
75 only exacerbate the issue. The CVB’s budget proposal is detailed if anyone wants to see it.

76
77 **Action:** Scott Wiggins moved adoption of the 2019 Tourism Program Budget. Ken Jupiter
78 seconded. Motion carried.

79
80 **Planning & Evaluation Committee Update – Ken Jupiter**

81

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82 The members were asked to vote to adopt the STPB Diversity Statement. (As of the July 18th
83 meeting, no further comments on the draft statement had been received by the Committee since
84 the June STPB meeting.)

85
86 **Action:** David Blake made a motion to adopt the STPB Diversity Statement. Brett Bossard
87 seconded. Motion carried.

88
89 **Arts & Culture Committee Report – Brett Bossard**

90
91 The Committee has been meeting monthly. ACOD funding has been a big topic of discussion.
92 Stephen Nunley joined the Arts and Culture reps at the last meeting. Committee plans to help set
93 clear goals for arts and culture in the upcoming Strategic Tourism Plan, as well as to brainstorm on
94 bigger-picture ways of enhancing arts and culture funding in our area.

95
96 **Strategic Tourism Implementation Grant Review Committee Update– Nick Helmholdt**

97
98 The STI Grant Review Committee received a request from the Downtown Ithaca Alliance to fund
99 Phase 2 of the Downtown Conference Center Feasibility Study, which focuses on the Green Street
100 Garage location. The Committee found the request to be of value and recommended funding the
101 project. Gary Ferguson assured the Board members that the trigger will not be pulled on the
102 project until a developer who plans to include a conference center is selected.

103
104 **Action:** David Blake moved to recommend \$42,675 in funding for the DIA’s “Downtown Ithaca
105 Community Conference Center: Phase Two” STI grant application. Stephen Nunley seconded.
106 Motion carried.

107
108 **Presentation: Lime Bikes & Visitors – Hector Chang, Bike Walk Tompkins**

109
110 Lime Bike launched here in late April, and 300 bicycles are now distributed throughout the City and
111 Town of Ithaca. Service has expanded, with 25 Lime Bikes in Trumansburg and 50 in Watkins Glen
112 and Montour Falls. An additional 100 new parking spaces for bikes will be created by the end of
113 this summer. The fleet will decrease in the winter. In less than 3 months, more than 34,000 rides,
114 10,000 users, and 25,000 miles have been recorded. Ithaca places in the top 5 Lime Bike markets
115 nationwide. Jeff Goodmark, Lime Bike’s local representative, is the person to contact with any
116 issues that arise. The company has a Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Ithaca, and
117 Bike Walk Tompkins convenes a community oversight committee regularly to assess how things
118 are going. All revenue from the rentals goes to Lime Bike. Lime Bike is also exploring the feasibility
119 of bringing other products to our area, such as electric scooters and e-bikes.

120
121 **Member Announcements**

122 Starting in 2019, Ithaca College will likely switch from hosting seven orientations throughout the
123 summer to one in August. Dates are set for the Ithaca Fantastik Film Festival, which has been
124 receiving nationwide press coverage. Downtown Ithaca Alliance is beginning work on the
125 Downtown 2030 Strategic Plan. There will be a planning session centered around area tourism
126 development and marketing. The Kitchen Theatre is hosting the first Ithaca One Minute Play
127 Festival on Saturday (7/21). Josh Friedman highly recommended the Civic Ensemble’s production
128 of “Fast Blood.” Dogs are welcome at Kilpatrick’s new Yappy Hour on Tuesday evenings. Fifty
129 percent of proceeds will be donated to the Tompkins County SPCA. Open Farms Days will be held
130 the weekend of August 11-12. The Chamber’s Annual Golf Tournament is August 1.

131
132 Chair Kelli Cartmill adjourned the meeting at 4:58pm.



Ithaca/Tompkins County Convention & Visitors Bureau

2018 Mid-Year Report
6 months ending June 2018/ Q2



Photo credits: Allison Usavage, CVB staff, and friends of Visit Ithaca



A Message from Peggy Coleman
VP, TOURISM/CVB DIRECTOR



**The Right Tools & The Right Team to support
Tompkins County Tourism Economy**

As we look back on the first half of 2018, it is inspiring to see the outcomes of the hard work invested by the CVB team. We continue to identify new tools like Simpleview, a CRM software to help make the team more productive as well as to better support our tourism partners. New workshops implemented by the marketing department were conducted for all Tompkins County Tourism Program marketing grant recipients. This has provided an opportunity for grant recipients to establish a more deliberate approach in their marketing efforts. The sales department has focused on more outreach in partnership with our tourism businesses, including a sales mission geared toward meeting and event planners in the Capital District planned for July 2018. The visitor experience department is assisting more visitors than ever before. We hope you have seen the team on campus or throughout the community in the Visit Ithaca van.

Every department continues to prepare for the new Tompkins Center for History & Culture coming in 2019. Various staff have been involved in the following areas including: governance, website, communications, downtown visitor center relocation, and retail business plan development to support all center partners while not competing with downtown merchants.

The research team from Jones, Lang, and LaSalle began work in earnest to update the Visitor Profile Study, with impressive response so far. We are excited to learn more from the intercept interviews which are under way through June 2019. The results of this study will help formulate the Strategic Tourism direction for 2021 and beyond.

Thank you to our tourism partners for your willingness to work together to grow the economic vitality of Tompkins County through tourism. Let's keep the momentum going for the rest of 2018 and beyond.

Safe travels,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peggy Coleman".

Peggy Coleman
VP, Tourism/CVB Director



Visit Ithaca is a division of the Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce

Off-site Activations

The Visit Ithaca van is now a rolling billboard to have at off-site events as we support visitors where they are rather than asking them to come to us.



Year to Date Visitor Touchpoints

	2018
TG Requests	2170
Phone Calls	573
Website Chats	1659
DVC Walk In	1872
ESD Walk In	1186
TFSP Walk In	9762
YTD Totals	17,222

Top 5 Feeder markets through Q2 – International:

Canada, Israel, Germany, UK, Netherlands

Top 5 Feeder markets through Q2 – Domestic:

Florida, Ohio, New Jersey Pennsylvania, New York

Expanding the Brand

We've successfully spread the love of our Ithaca is Gorges brand through June 2018, already topping our annual goals. Apparel is our #1 seller! Local art is the next largest category people select as a memento of their visit to Tompkins County.

TOP FIVE ITEMS:

Fridge magnets
1100+

Postcards
750+

Ithaca is Gorges Tees
840+

Finger Lakes Tees
540+

Chat

Through June 2018 we've assisted 1659 visitors through our online chat feature.

HOT TOPICS:

Events

Lodging

Waterfalls/State Parks/Hiking

Attractions & Restaurants

✓ 915,095,486 regional impressions

✓ 50 placements on Finger Lakes tourism product in national media outlets

✓ 39 million impressions for Tompkins County tourism partners in outlets such as:

DEPARTURES **Forbes** **MEN'S JOURNAL** **ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST**

Partner Programs

Successfully organized and presented two partner programs:

- **February:** Packaging seminar with 26 attendees
- **May:** First of newly required marketing workshops for partners who have been awarded tourism marketing grants through the Tompkins County Tourism Program with 42 people attending

Agriculinary Tourism

The first round of agriculinary tourism microgrants have closed out and the second has been launched for the fall season. Projects have included everything from creating signage for better way-finding for visitors to our farm grant recipients, to developing marketing materials, to digital marketing and advertising for events. The agriculinary tourism marketing position has been elevated from part-time to full-time, to take the agriculinary tourism program to the next level.

Media Tours

- Hosted two travel journalists and assisted two others with itineraries and activities
- Hosted new Executive Director of Finger Lakes Regional Tourism Council and the team at Break the Ice Media on a Familiarization tour

Coming soon

- Media tours for 19 social influencers
- 5 upcoming visits from travel journalists



Social

INSTAGRAM

37,193 Instagram user engagements in 2018

6,694 Instagram followers through June 2018 – 44% increase year over year

FACEBOOK

40,500 Ithaca is Gorges Facebook followers

1,626 Ithaca Loves Teachers Facebook followers – 25% increase year over year

Top Insta takeover:

May 21-27 @crookedseam highlighting local women small business owners



VisitIthaca.com

Visit Ithaca website page views – 788,849 in 2018 YTD compared to 735,927 in 2017

Top visited pages on Visit Ithaca:

- Ithaca Events with 281,266 – page views YTD
- Waterfalls with 34,685 – page views YTD
- Dining with 34,157 – page views YTD

Event Highlights

Gorges Ithaca Half Marathon grew by record numbers with the support of marketing efforts spearheaded by the CVB & Chamber as a co-sponsoring organization. Over 1130 registered this year compared to 740 registrants in 2017. 69% of registrants were from outside of Tompkins County and 18% were from outside of NYS.

Over 24 tourism partners participated in providing “Show your Bib and Save” promotional offers for attendees.

Winter Recess

2018’s Winter Recess campaign drew more than 4,000 attendees, up 8% over 2017 creating a minimum economic impact of \$152,646 of visitor spending over a ten-day period in February.



- ☑ Meetings & Conferences – YTD: 24 leads have been generated representing \$2,208,470 in potential economic impact and 9,026 room nights.
- ☑ Tour & Travel – YTD: 27 leads have been distributed representing \$950,952 in potential economic impact and 2,738 room nights.

Meetings Market

“Retreat to Ithaca” campaign kicked off in June for the meetings and conference market. The CVB partnered with five hotel partners to attend the annual Empire State Society of Association Executives (ESSAE) tradeshow in Albany along with a Meeting Professionals International (MPI) networking reception.

- Through the addition of a focused meetings and conference sales effort, YOY: Sales leads have increased 21%

Retreat TO ITHACA

"I appreciate your help and have often given you and your Ithaca Visitors Bureau much credit for playing a significant role in our meeting's success."

– Mary Schwark, President-elect,
Woman's National Farm &
Garden Association



Tour & Travel

- Tompkins County was represented at **American Bus Association (ABA) – 40 appts., Heartland Travel Showcase – 28 appts., Pennsylvania Bus Association (PBA) Marketplace – 26 appts., PBA Annual Meeting – 11 appts., and Travel Alliance Partners (TAP) Dance – 26 appts.**, an invitation only tour operator sales retreat.
- Hosted the Travel Alliance Partner's Board of Directors meeting, exposing top tour operators to our destination, and offering them new experiences to include in their guaranteed departure tours. We've already had one direct booking.
- Hosted group of travel agents from the UK and Ireland on a Brand USA Familiarization tour in May.

"Martz is a wonderful company...and they're in good company when they work with people like you Sarah."

– Bill Guest from Martz Group
regarding CVB Tour & Travel
Manager Sarah Imes



Simpleview, customer relationship management software built specifically for destination marketing organizations, was rolled out in February. This software allows for database management of partner information, a central location for lead distribution, and is a hub for managing partner listings on the website. While CVB staff are continuing to optimize this tool, and roll out extranet trainings to partners, internally the system was fully implemented by March 1 and is resulting in better reporting and information management.

Visitor Profile Study – Jones, Lang, LaSalle (JLL) has been contracted to update the profile of visitors to Tompkins County. The benchmark study was performed in 2009 by Chmura. In spring, JLL launched a digital survey to past visitors as the primary instrument for collecting feedback. We have had 1300+ responses to the digital survey, exceeding the total survey response of the benchmark Chmura Study. The secondary collection instrument is a twelve-month randomized intercept survey, where visitors will be interviewed at various sites throughout Tompkins County. The intercept interviews are scheduled to begin in July.

Tompkins Center for History & Culture – Multiple team members are involved in the planning of the grand opening of the new Tompkins Center for History & Culture. Scheduled to open in early 2019, the Center will be home to the new Downtown Visitor Center.

A2D Training

The CVB and Workforce Development Board have partnered to bring a new Tourism Ambassador Training program entitled Arrival to Departure (A2D) to Tompkins County with an estimated launch date of October. Available on an ongoing basis, once training modules are completed by participants, they will become an “A2D Visitor Champion”. Following the completion of the online learning modules the CVB will offer an in-person class to help solidify the learning experience as well as a Familiarization tour of the County’s attractions. As the program becomes more established, the CVB will organize quarterly networking events for hospitality partners designed to showcase new and existing tourism partners offerings.

China Welcome

The CVB was instrumental in helping to organize the China Welcome program spearheaded by the Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport and the China Ready committee. The program was held on May 9th for area businesses, hospitality partners and higher education institutions. The CVB is moving forward with creating translated materials and establishing a resource for tourism partners to access these services as well to help our destination become more welcoming to the China market.





Ithaca/Tompkins County Convention & Visitors Bureau Staff Contacts

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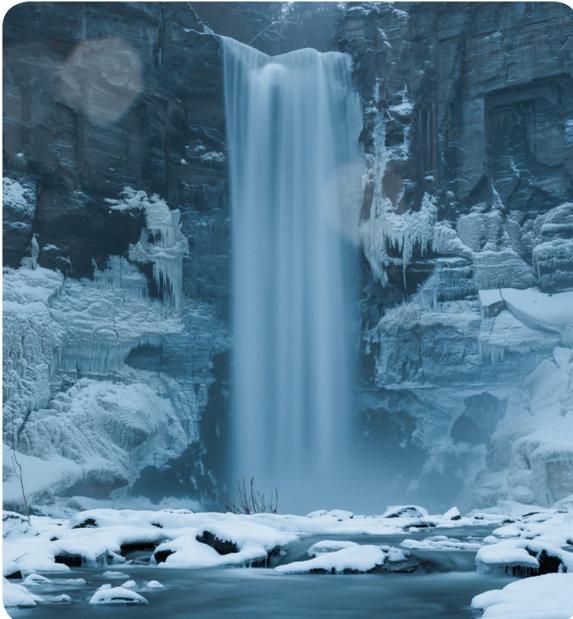
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VISITOR EXPERIENCE SPECIALISTS:

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**Instagram post
with the most
engagement
Jan. – June '18:**

Taughannock Falls
in winter by
@brycer19er,
Jan. 30, 2018

2018 Fall Community Celebrations Applications

Applicant	Celebration Name	Municipality	Expected Attendance	Event Start Date	Event End Date	Amount Requested	Recommended Funding	Notes
Vitamin L Project (CTA)	Vitamin L's 30th Birthday Celebration Event	City of Ithaca	600	1/26/2019	1/26/2019	\$1,000	TBD	Eligible and complete
Groton Recreation	Groton Cabin Fever Festival	Village of Groton	500	3/2/2019	3/2/2019	\$1,000	TBD	Eligible and complete
Ithaca Childrens Garden	2019 Festival of Fire & Ice	City of Ithaca	875	2/9/2019	2/9/2019	\$1,675	TBD	Eligible and complete
Wassa Pan Afrika Dance Ensemble	African Drumming and Dance 2018	City of Ithaca	100	11/1/2018	12/15/2018	\$2,000	TBD	1) Indicates fiscal sponsor is City of Ithaca but no notice given. 2) Requested amount exceeds 50% of total costs.
Ithaca Concert Band	A Season of Free Band Concerts 2019	City of Ithaca	3000	1/1/2019	12/23/2019	\$1,000	TBD	1) Waiting on IRS non profit determination letter from Treasurer.
Totals						\$5,675		
Available						\$11,960		
Difference						\$6,285		

2018 Fall New Tourism Initiative Applications

Applicant	Project Title	Expected Attendance	Event Start Date	Event End Date	Amount Requested	Recommended Funding	Notes
Discover Cayuga Lake (CTA)	MV Teal Overhaul - Phase II	3,000	5/1/2019	N/A	\$8,250	TBD	Eligible and complete
Ithaca Children's Garden	The Wonders of Wetlands	75,000	6/1/2018	N/A	\$8,686	TBD	Eligible and complete
Ithaca Youth Bureau	2019 Ithaca Bike Rental Guided Bike Tours and Multi-Ability Recumbent Trikes	276	5/1/2019	N/A	\$10,475	TBD	Eligible and complete
The History Center	2019 Exploring Science, Imagination and Culture in Tompkins County: What is our next Taughannock Giant?	80	3/22/2019	3/23/2019	\$3,000	TBD	Eligible and complete
Totals					\$30,411		
Available					\$34,050		
Difference					\$3,639		