

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

1 **Date:** May 19, 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>Henry Granison</i>	P	<i>TC Legislature, Non-Voting</i>
Connie Kan	P	At-Large	<i>Heather McDaniel</i>	P	<i>IEAD, 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>		<i>Transportation, Non-Voting</i>
Doug Levine	P	Arts-Culture	<i>Jim Brophy</i>	A	<i>Associate Member</i>
Kelly Makosch	P	Recreation	<i>Erica Frenay</i>	A	<i>Associate Member</i>
Rick Manning	P	At-Large	<i>Ken Jupiter</i>	P	<i>Associate Member</i>
Erin Marteau	E	At-Large	<i>Carol Kammen</i>	P	<i>Associate Member</i>
Greg Mezey	P	At-Large	<i>Michael Miller</i>	P	<i>Associate Member</i>
Todd Parlato	P	At-Large	<i>Jon Reis</i>	P	<i>Associate Member</i>
Barbara Romano	P	Cornell University	<i>Wylie Schwartz</i>	E	<i>Associate Member</i>
Monika Roth	P	Agriculture	Nick Helmholdt	P	Tourism Program Director
Deb Mohlenhoff	E	TC3	Kristin McCarthy	P	TCDPS
Steven Stull	P	Arts-Culture			
Scott Wiggins	A	At-Large			

7 **Guests:** Yamila Fournier

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 9 **Opening Remarks/Changes to the Agenda** – Chair Kelli Cartmill called meeting to order at 3:03pm. No
 10 changes to the agenda.

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 12 **Action: Approval of April 2021 STPB Meeting Minutes** – The draft March meeting minutes were approved
 13 as submitted (motion by Monika Roth, seconded by Josh Friedman). Motion carried.

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 15 **Privilege of the Floor** – No members of the public spoke.

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 17 **Chair’s Report – Kelli Cartmill**
 18 Kelli skipped her chair’s report to ensure time on the agenda for a robust discussion during the Tourism
 19 Recovery Committee update scheduled for later in the meeting.

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 21 **Staff Report – Nick Helmholdt**
 22 Nick updated group on Budget Committee deliberations and developments with the Diversity, Equity and
 23 Inclusion Subcommittee. He also shared that the Planning & Evaluation Committee continue to discuss
 24 short term rental regulations and compliance.

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28 **Presentation: Draft 2022 Tourism Program Budget – Josh Friedman, on behalf of Budget Committee**

29 Josh provided an overview of the draft 2022 Tourism Program budget, sharing insights into the process
30 involved in developing it and providing background and context. This budget includes revenue from hotel
31 room occupancy taxes and the American Rescue Plan. Most expense lines in the draft budget are restored
32 to amounts that are approximately equal to the original (pre-Covid) 2020 budget. Using the budget memo
33 included in the agenda packet as a guide, he broke down the various programmatic components and
34 explained how the committee came to their decisions for each. Highlights include funding for a new
35 Outdoor Recreation Organization Development Grant as proposed in the 2018 Outdoor Recreation Tourism
36 Implementation Plan. Q&A discussion covered various topics, including conference center funding,
37 Beautification Program requests, workforce development, clarification regarding CVB figures for matching
38 funds, and future of funding for Ithaca Area Economic Development. Josh thanked everyone on the Budget
39 Committee for their time and dedication. A final budget will be presented to STPB for a vote at the June 16
40 meeting. Members should submit comments regarding the draft version to Nick by June 7.

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42 **Update: Tourism Recovery Committee – Kelli Cartmill**

43 Kelli reported that Peggy and Erin (Rafalowski) recently updated the Tourism Recovery Committee on the
44 CVB's "Retreat to Ithaca" campaign, which is hosted on Sojern, a digital marketing platform for the travel
45 industry. Traffic and engagement have been good, and data can be mined that will prove beneficial for
46 promoting winter CVB campaigns as well. The remainder of Kelli's report was a continuation of a
47 conversation started at the last committee meeting regarding the issues facing employers in hospitality,
48 restaurants, and the service industry more generally as many companies are having unprecedented
49 difficulty in attracting and retaining staff. STPB members shared their own experiences with staffing issues
50 and brainstormed on possible concrete solutions-focused next steps. These included STPB members
51 collaborating with local economic development partners to craft advocacy statements that could be
52 brought to the City of Ithaca Common Council and County Legislature to provide short-term direct relief for
53 the industry through worker incentives and other actions. Discussion covered possible funding sources,
54 including American Rescue Plan monies; the need for political will, astute messaging, and engagement with
55 local small business community; wage disparity and role for exploring tangential support in the form of
56 child care and health care; research into similar incentive-based models used in other areas; as well as data
57 and intelligence gathering from industry stakeholders.

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59 **Action:** Greg Mezey, seconded by Brett Bossard, moved to form an ad hoc committee of STPB members
60 and representatives from local key economic development agencies to make recommendations to both
61 the City of Ithaca and Tompkins County for immediate action to support workforce development and
62 economic recovery of the tourism sector within Tompkins County. The STPB feels strongly that 2022-2023
63 is way too late, and we urgently need to boost this sector in a way that will generate tax revenue for the
64 County and support our workforce. Motion carried unanimously by the members present.

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66 **Member Announcements** – Members shared events and news of interest from the State Theatre,
67 Triphammer Arts, and Chamber of Commerce/CVB.

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69 Chair Kelli Cartmill adjourned the meeting at 4:30pm.