

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

1 **Date:** Sept. 18, 2024  
 2 **Time:** 3:00-4:30pm  
 3 **Location:** Ithaca College Athletics & Event Center, 953 Danby Road, Ithaca/Via Zoom

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

6 **Guests:** Suzanne Smith Jablonski, Chris Stephany, Katherine Taylor

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 8 **Opening Remarks/Changes to the Agenda/Privilege of the Floor** – Chair Brett Bossard opened the  
 9 meeting at 3:05pm. No privilege of the floor. No changes to agenda.

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 11 **Action: Approval of July 2024 STPB Draft Minutes** – The draft July 2024 minutes were approved (moved by  
 12 Doug Levine, seconded by Ken Jupiter) as submitted. Motion carried.

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 14 **Chair's Report** – *Brett Bossard*  
 15 Brett thanked everyone for attending and handed things off quickly to Nick for staff report given the  
 16 numerous action items on the agenda.

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 18 **Staff Report** – *Nick Helmholdt*  
 19 Nick reported on numerous topics, such as the draft bylaws, grant recommendations, and the Tourism  
 20 Promotion Agency resolution. He also shared highlights from the Visitor Profile Study and announced  
 21 upcoming events, including the downtown conference center ribbon cutting and the Monumental Women  
 22 statues dedication. Members asked about the absence of Pennsylvania as a place of origin and the low  
 23 number of people citing college as a reason for visiting. Nick noted that these results were based on a  
 24 limited initial sample and that additional analysis would be conducted. He also shared that more  
 25 information would become available as the study progressed.

26  
 27 **Membership & Bylaws Committee** – *Doug Levine*  
 28 On behalf of the committee, Doug recommended Jason Sidle for an at-large seat on the STPB, citing his  
 29 local ties and extensive hospitality experience. Jason is currently at La Tourelle and was previously with  
 30 Coltivare for many years. The committee is also working with staff to revise the board's bylaws in  
 31 compliance with the County Legislature's new template and is considering changes to board composition.

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32 The group discussed counting virtual attendance towards quorum and will seek input on potential legal  
33 implications.

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35 **Action:** Doug Levine made a motion, which Laura Winter Falk seconded, to recommend appointing Jason  
36 Sidle (At-Large) to the Strategic Tourism Planning Board. Motion carried.

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38 **Report/Action: Community Celebrations Grant Review Committee** – *Doug Levine*

39 Doug presented a summary of the grant applications received, thanking the committee and staff for their  
40 support of the Community Celebrations program. He noted a decrease in applications between spring and  
41 fall and explained that he had recused himself from voting on the Dorothy Cotton Jubilee Singers  
42 application due to the event's location at the State Theatre. Bethany shared her experiences as a grant  
43 writer completing such applications, and Brett commented on the importance of skills building for small  
44 organizations

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46 **Action:** Doug Levine made a motion, which Bethany Parisi seconded, to recommend the 2024 Fall  
47 Community Celebrations grant awards be approved for funding. Motion carried, with Doug Levine  
48 abstaining.

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50 **Report/Action: Tourism Advancement Grant Committee** – *Monika Roth*

51 Monika summarized the applications submitted in this round and thanked her fellow committee members  
52 for their service. Most projects focused on marketing and refining strategies, while one supported a music  
53 education program. Committee members were pleased with the focus on winter-related initiatives.

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55 **Action:** Monika Roth made a motion, which Laura Winter Falk seconded, to recommend the 2024 Fall  
56 Tourism Advancement grant awards be approved for funding. Motion carried, with Steven Stull and Rick  
57 Manning abstaining.

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59 **Report: Tourism Capital Grant Review Committee** – *Nick Helmholdt*

60 On behalf of the committee, Nick presented an overview of the 15 applications received for this round of  
61 funding, expressing gratitude to its members and Kurt Anderson from Ithaca Area Economic Development  
62 for their contributions. Requests for funding (\$900K) far exceeded the available budget (\$300K). Several  
63 feasibility studies were among the submissions, along with maintenance requests such as lighting upgrades  
64 at the State Theater and HVAC replacement at the Science Center. Ultimately, the committee  
65 recommended funding for 10 applications, leaving no funds remaining. The report and subsequent Q&A  
66 session covered the rationale behind the funding decisions and addressed questions from the audience.

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68 **Action:** Ken Jupiter made a motion, which Jeff Golden seconded, to recommend the 2024 Tourism Capital  
69 Grant awards be approved for funding. Motion carried, with Rick Manning and Monika Roth abstaining.

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71 **Presentation: Hospitality Workforce** – *Christian Harris, NYS Department of Labor*

72 Christian presented on hospitality workforce issues. He discussed the economic impact of tourism in the  
73 Southern Tier region, including Tompkins County, and highlighted the demographics and job needs within  
74 the industry. He began by providing an overview of the New York State Department of Labor and his role as  
75 a regional labor market analyst, explaining that his catchment area includes eight counties in the Southern  
76 Tier region. He then discussed the Department of Labor's involvement in federal employment and wage  
77 surveys and their role in analyzing labor market data. Additionally, Christian presented data from the  
78 Tourism Economics report, which provides an overview of the economic impact of tourism in New York  
79 State. He highlighted the significant economic impact of tourism, both statewide and in the Finger Lakes

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80 region. He also discussed the growth in tourism-related spending since the COVID-19 pandemic. He then  
81 focused on Tompkins County, highlighting the county's contribution to visitor spending and the number of  
82 jobs related to tourism. He also discussed the wages paid to tourism workers in the county and the  
83 demographics of the tourism workforce. Finally, Christian presented data on job openings in the hospitality  
84 and tourism industry in Tompkins County. He noted that there is a significant need for workers in this  
85 industry, particularly in entry-level positions. He concluded his presentation by answering questions from  
86 the audience, providing more information on the data sources used in the presentation and discussing the  
87 challenges of attracting and retaining workers in the hospitality and tourism industry.

88

### **Presentation: Geolocation Data – *Melissa Mitchell, Zartico***

90 Melissa Mitchell from Zartico presented on the use of geolocation data to analyze visitor behavior. She  
91 explained how Zartico works with Visit Ithaca to provide data-driven insights into visitor demographics,  
92 spending patterns, and movement within the destination. By tracking cell phone pings and credit card  
93 transactions, Zartico can identify key visitor segments, map visitor journeys, and analyze spending  
94 patterns. This real-time data allows Visit Ithaca to make informed decisions for marketing, event planning,  
95 and traffic management. In the Q&A session, attendees discussed the average visitor spend during the  
96 eclipse weekend, data filtering methods, and the integration of Zartico's data with existing visitor profile  
97 studies.

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### **Member Announcements**

100 Members shared items of interest related to Triphammer Arts, Friends of Stewart Park, Cayuga Chamber  
101 Orchestra, Greater Ithaca Art Trail, Ithaca Soul Fest, a community wine course, Opera Ithaca, various  
102 theatres in town, Ithaca Farmers Market, and more. Additionally, Rick announced the groundbreaking for a  
103 new picnic pavilion at Stewart Park. Finally, the group acknowledged the upcoming departure of Jennifer  
104 from the Chamber of Commerce and expressed their gratitude for her contributions to the board. Peggy  
105 will serve as the interim director of the Chamber.

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107 **Adjournment** – Chair Brett Bossard adjourned the meeting at 4:38pm.