

**Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB)
Draft Meeting Minutes – April 2015**

1 **Date:** April 15, 2015
 2 **Time:** 3:00-5:00pm
 3 **Location:** CVB
 4
 5

Attendees:

Name	✓	Representation	Name	✓	Representation
Anne Kellerman	✓	At-Large	Christy Agnese	✓	Ithaca College
Ian Golden	E	Recreation	Sue Perlgut	✓	Arts-Culture
Ethan Ash	✓	Arts-Culture	Josh Friedman	✓	Arts-Culture
John Gutenberger	✓	Cornell	<i>John Spence</i>	✓	<i>CAP, Non-Voting</i>
Lynnette Scofield	✓	Lodging	<i>Bruce Stoff</i>	✓	<i>CVB, Non-Voting</i>
Kelli Cartmill	✓	Lodging	<i>Dwight Mengel</i>	E	<i>Transportation, Non-Voting</i>
Rita Rosenberg	✓	Agriculture	<i>Gary Ferguson</i>	✓	<i>DIA, Non-Voting</i>
David Blake	✓	At-Large	<i>Jennifer Tavares</i>	E	<i>Chamber, Non-Voting</i>
Andy Zepp	✓	At-Large	<i>Martha Armstrong</i>	✓	<i>TCAD, Non-Voting</i>
Stephen Nunley	✓	At-Large	<i>Will Burbank</i>	✓	<i>TC Legislature, Non-Voting</i>
Steve Hugo	✓	At-Large	<i>Beverly Baker</i>		<i>Associate Member</i>
Ken Jupiter	A	At-Large	<i>Carol Kammen</i>		<i>Associate Member</i>
Mike Mellor	✓	At-Large	<i>Jon Reis</i>		<i>Associate Member</i>
Anne Gossen	✓	Arts-Culture	Tom Knipe	✓	Staff
Sue Stafford	E	TC3	Jennifer Turner	✓	Staff

8 **Also in attendance:** Julia Mattick; Diane Bradac, Hospitality Workforce Investment Program, Ronda Roaring
 9

10 **Meeting Agenda**

- 11 1) Opener
 12 2) March STPB Meeting Minutes
 13 • ACTION – Approve Meeting Minutes
 14 3) Privilege of the Floor
 15 4) Hospitality Workforce Investment Program – Julia Mattick & Diane Bradac
 16 • Annual Presentation
 17 5) Chair's Report
 18 6) Staff Report – Tom Knipe
 19 7) Committee Check-Ins
 20 • Task Forces: Agriculinary, Heritage
 21 • Ad-Hoc Committees – Chmura, Meeting Space, etc.
 22 8) 2015 Tourism Capital Grants – Martha Armstrong
 23 9) Special ACOD Committee Recommendations – John Spence
 24 10) CVB 2015 1st Quarter Report – Bruce Stoff
 25 11) Announcements (time permitting)
 26

27 **The meeting was called to order** at 3:02 PM.

28
 29 **Opener** – Sue Perlgut opened the meeting by asking members of the STPB to engage in an interactive
 30 activity. Members were asked to answer six survey questions related to travel and share their answers.
 31

32 **March 2015 STPB meeting minutes were approved** with no changes.
 33

34 **Privilege of the Floor** – Ronda Roaring expressed concerns with the present and past year's recipients of
 35 grant funding.
 36

37 **Hospitality Workforce Investment Program** – Julia Mattick reported that the Hospitality Workforce
 38 Investment Program was first funded by the Strategic Planning Board in 2008. The program's main goals
 39 are career pathways, employee development skills, increased employee industry recognized certifications,
 40 the creation of local ambassadors, and further developed training and resource opportunities. It was noted

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41 that their group will continue collaboration with Tom Knipe on evaluation planning. The Convention and
42 Visitors Bureau, Downtown Ithaca Alliance, TC3, Workforce New York, and training providers were named
43 as the primary key constituents of the Hospitality Workforce Development Investment Program.
44

45 Diane Bradac reported on challenges in the community regarding the labor market. Both the labor force and
46 job growth were mentioned as key concerns. A decline in the labor force was noted as fewer students are
47 working and a higher number of area employees are commuting from to work from outside the county. The
48 workforce development initiative will continue to focus on challenges of the future by enhancing
49 ambassadorship and customer service skills for positions in restaurants, lodging, and accommodations.
50 Diane noted that by focusing on the attraction and retention of these positions, doors will open for not only
51 entry level positions but also potential job growth within those industries. The Hospitality Star program was
52 noted as a two-day certificate program that is designed to build knowledge about the Tompkins County
53 hospitality industry and applied skills. The next Hospitality Star training will be on June 16-17. Members of
54 the STPB were asked to provide feedback on their experiences with hospitality, specific areas of focus, and
55 additional efforts at making Tompkins County superior in customer service. Member feedback will be
56 compiled for distribution at a later date. For more information on the Hospitality Star Program please
57 contact: hospitalitySTAR@tompkins-co.org
58

59 **Chair's Report** – Sue Perlgut reported that the 2016 budget process has started. Three meetings have
60 been scheduled for April 22nd, May 27th, and June 15th. She went on to report on the meeting she attended
61 yesterday with AirBnB representatives and representatives from Tompkins County, and the City and Town
62 of Ithaca. Will Burbank reported that AirBnB is willing to work with Tompkins County to help implement the
63 tax. Tom Knipe mentioned the AirBnB civics team which primarily focuses on cultivating and partnering with
64 sharing cities. Opportunities to develop a partnership that will allow AirBnB to promote this area and the
65 possibility for data and demographic information sharing were discussed. Jane Marie Law was noted as an
66 active AirBnB host who has been proactive in getting 60 hosts registered to pay the room tax. Sue Perlgut
67 announced the celebration honoring Stuart Stein on May 3rd at 2:30 p.m. at the Statler Hotel. Spring Writes,
68 Streets Alive, The Dorothy Cotton Jubilee Singers, and the East Shore Festival were noted tourism program
69 funded events that are also taking place that weekend.
70

71 **Staff Report** – Tom Knipe reported on the memorial internship fund that has been established in memory
72 of Stuart Stein. He noted that the memorial fund hopes to reach a goal of \$20,000 through fundraising and
73 donations and will be used to support an annual memorial internship that will sponsor a student in the
74 Department of City and Regional Planning at Cornell University to work directly with the community around
75 heritage tourism development. Tom went on to report on evaluation planning work with the Festivals
76 Program. He noted that the festivals program recently hosted a series of workshops that included
77 presentations and discussions. Tom announced that invitations will be sent to members of the STPB for the
78 upcoming Commons Celebration on August 28-29th.
79

80 **Committee Check-Ins** – Rita Rosenberg reported that the Agri-Culinary Committee met this week and
81 discussed an agri-culinary workshop that Ethan attended in Vermont. The timeline for plan development is
82 being updated. Tom Knipe went on to report on a USDA agricultural marketing service grant program that
83 their committee will apply for. The deadline for the application is May 14th. Anne Gossen reported that the
84 Heritage Committee will meet next week. She went on to note on the statewide one-day tourism conference
85 that Tom Knipe attended and noted the transitional changes taking place at the History Center. Bruce Stoff
86 reported that the CHMURA Committee and outside stakeholders met and reviewed and discussed the
87 research questions for the Request for Proposals. Bruce asked committee members for additional
88 feedback. The plan moving forward will be to take the existing research and use it along with a new RFP for
89 another research proposal; joint research with the Discovery Trail and the Waterfront Trail may be used.
90 The revised RFP is expected in June. Meeting space and the proposal for Hotel Ithaca was discussed; a
91 response from the developer is pending. The Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council was
92 discussed as a possible source of support for a meeting facility. A small group of STPB members will be
93 formed in order to provide input on the contract between the County and the Chamber. Efforts to
94 reconstitute the Festivals Committee are underway.
95

96 **2015 Tourism Capital Grants** – Martha Armstrong announced that there is \$205,000 in total with \$94,000
97 dedicated to funding for this year. Funding of \$111,000 will be available for future years. Using the

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98 summary provided in the agenda packet, Martha walked STPB members through the grant review
99 committee's recommendations.

100
101 The board voted unanimously to forward the committee's recommendations to the Legislature, without
102 changes.

103
104 **Special ACOD Committee Recommendations** – John Spence opened his report by giving thanks to
105 members of the taskforce on their efforts with the recommendations. He went on to report the confirmed
106 definition of arts and culture and noted that the funding available is for large established organizations in
107 Tompkins County and will not include start-ups. The requirement that the group own or operate a facility of
108 their own was eliminated as groups frequently have performances at different venues. It was noted that all
109 groups currently being funded by the ACOD grant meet the new eligibility criteria. ACOD grantees will be
110 required to attend two mandatory meetings a year. The 1st meeting will occur early in the year and will
111 encourage groups to help increase and enhance the Tompkins County brand as a cultural destination. A 2nd
112 meeting will take place later in the year and will focus on problem resolution and opportunities for
113 collaboration. Continued support, capacity maintenance, and evaluation of the proposed plans were
114 discussed in order to ensure that the grantees meet the desired outcomes of their plan. Other room-tax
115 related opportunities, outside of the ACOD program, to support other tourism related sectors was noted as
116 a topic for discussion at a later date.

117
118 **CVB 2015 1st Quarter Report** – Bruce Stoff reported that through February occupancy rates were up .6%,
119 demand was up 3.4%, and revenue was up 8.2%. Through marketing in Key West, overall numbers were
120 noted as being phenomenally high. The lake house campaign was an investment used as a follow up to the
121 marketing in Key West and received 48,000 hits and 10 million impressions that increased the email list by
122 16,800. An LGBT focus group was established where discussions centered on implementing the rainbow
123 acceptance stickers throughout the community. Group sales increased for the quarter from 22 booked last
124 year to 26 bookings this year. Discussions centered on the issues that occurred after a statewide wrestling
125 event that lead to a number of area hotels refusing to provide guests group rates in the future. Bruce went
126 on to report that walk-ins at visitors' centers were up at both sites and 1,465 online chats were exchanged.
127 The mobile technology initiative is underway.

128
129 **Announcements** – John Spence reported that the Fringe Fest will take place this weekend and will offer a
130 number of different plays; tickets for the entire event are \$55.00. Josh Friedman announced the free event
131 that was created in collaboration with Civic Ensemble at the Hangar Theatre April 22nd, which will feature
132 plays written by ex-convicts re-entering the community. Martha Armstrong announced the event with the
133 Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor at Coltivare on June 4th.

134
135 With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:58pm.

136
137 Respectfully Submitted,
138 Jennifer Turner, Administrative Assistant
139 Tompkins County Planning Department

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141 **Next Meeting Scheduled**
142 Wednesday May 20, 2015