

**Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB)  
Meeting Minutes Draft – April 2014**

1 **Date:** April 16, 2014  
 2 **Time:** 3:00-4:30pm  
 3 **Location:** CVB / Chamber of Commerce  
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**Attendees:**

Name	✓	Representation	Name	✓	Representation
Anne Kellerman	✓	At-Large	Sue Perlgut	✓	Arts-Culture
Anthony Hopson	✓	Ithaca College	Susie Monagan	✓	Arts-Culture
Ian Golden	✓	Recreation	John Spence	A	CAP, Non-Voting
Ethan Ash	✓	Arts-Culture	Bruce Stoff	E	CVB, Non-Voting
John Gutenberger	✓	Cornell	Dwight Mengel	A	Transportation, Non-Voting
Lynette Scofield	A	Lodging	Gary Ferguson	A	DIA, Non-Voting
Rick Adie	✓	Lodging	Jean McPheeters	A	Chamber, Non-Voting
Rita Rosenberg	✓	Agriculture	Martha Armstrong	✓	TCAD, Non-Voting
Andy Zepp	A	At-Large	Will Burbank	E	TC Legislature, Non-Voting
Stephen Nunley	A	At-Large	Beverly Baker	A	Associate Member
Steve Hugo	E	At-Large	Carol Kammen	A	Associate Member
Ken Jupiter	A	At-Large	Jon Reis	A	Associate Member
Michael Mellor	✓	At-Large	Stuart Stein	A	Associate Member
Anne Gossen	✓	At-Large	Tom Knipe	✓	Staff
Sue Stafford	A	TC3	Jennifer Turner	✓	Staff
Christy Agnese	✓	At-Large			

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9 **Also in attendance:** Jodi La Pierre, Sarah Imes and Mary Rachun – **Convention and Visitors Bureau**

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11 **Agenda**

- 12 Opener  
 13 March Meeting Minutes  
 14 Privilege of the Floor  
 15 Chairs Report – Rick Adie  
 16 Staff Report – Tom Knipe  
 17 Tourism Capital Grant Recommendations – Martha Armstrong  
 18 Action – Recommend Tourism Capital Grants  
 19 STPB Budget Committee Report  
 20 Discussion  
 21 CVB Monthly Report – Jodi LaPierre, Mary Rachun  
 22 AG & Culinary Taskforce Report – Rita Rosenberg-Barber  
 23 Upcoming Tourism Program - Funded Events  
 24 And Collecting and Recording STPB Member Impressions

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26 **Discussion**

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28 **The meeting was called to order** at 3:06 PM.  
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30 **Opener:** Tom Knipe opened the meeting with an interactive exercise to engage the group in thinking about  
 31 their personal experience with visitor services. All members were encouraged to speak with another person  
 32 to get to know one another better and share experiences of a memorable trip that included experiences  
 33 where they were well taken care of.  
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35 **March 2014 STPB meeting minutes** were approved with no changes  
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37 **Chairs Report** – Rick Adie congratulated the Community Arts Partnership on a recent article which  
 38 featured the Ithaca Art Trail as one of the best art experiences outside of New York City. The May STPB  
 39 Meeting will take place at the State Theatre on May 21<sup>st</sup>.  
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41 Staff Report

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- A new STPB resource library will be available soon on an FTP site and will include access to the budget and progress reports. Anne Kellerman has assisted with this project.
- The Spring 2014 tourism grants have passed the legislature. Members of the EDC had questions about why The Ithaca Festival was not among the applicants. Tom and Bruce both met with the new Ithaca Festival director to encourage them to apply in this round, but they did not come forward with an application. Tom will reach out to explore options with them again.
- The CVB's evaluation planning work is underway with support from Monica Hargraves and CCETC. The process will take about 4 months and the outcomes will include an evaluation plan, logic and pathway models for CVB programs and clear performance indicators for the CVB. Tom praised the CVB for stepping up to model this approach to program evaluation and expressed a goal to develop a culture of evaluation across the entire Tourism Program.
- Tom and Stu Stein have recruited members of the Heritage Tourism Task Force and the group will convene a first meeting soon.

**Tourism Capital Grant Recommendations** – Martha Armstrong announced that there are \$195,000 in funds in 2014 with \$95,000 already dedicated to previous year's awards. There were six new applications. The review panel tended to give priority to newer projects in their award recommendations.

Application	Request	Recommend	Recommend Years
Finger Lakes Reuse Center	9,698	0	2014
Tompkins Planning: Cayuga Blueway Trail: Design Study	18,000	10,000	2014
CSMA: 3 <sup>rd</sup> Floor Performance Space Capital Improvement Phase 1	55,134	55,000	31,000 – 2014 24,000 – 2015
Ithaca Children's Garden: Edible Forest Garden Phase 1	34,235	34,000	2014
PRI Cayuga Nature Center: Cayuga Lake Past and Present Exhibit	85,000	40,000	20,000 – 2014 10,000 – 2015 10,000 – 2016
Sciencenter Mini Golf Construction	100,000	25,000	0 – 2014 10,000 – 2015 15,000 – 2016
<b>Totals</b>	<b>302,067</b>	<b>164,000</b>	

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- Board members had questions about CSMA and their contributions to tourism. *Tourism-focused events such as Spring Writes, Winter Village Bluegrass Festival and the Fringe Festival already take place there, and the improvements will allow more events including some types of meetings to take place there.*
- Members also asked about the Sciencenter's ability to reconstruct a golf course that would draw more visitors. There were feelings that the room for improvement was too small and may not make a sizeable difference from its current state – *The Sciencenter emphasized the need to increase the span of years of interest in children and felt that if they made these upgrades it would keep youngsters interested into their teen years.*
- A member suggested that the Blueway Trail signage work be coordinated with the Wayfinding Strategy. *It is being coordinated.*

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74 **Convention & Visitors Bureau Report Highlights** – Mary Rachun: February was a robust month for the  
75 lodging industry with increases in revenue, rate and occupancy. The Farm to Fork grant was used for online  
76 display ads and YouTube video ads in key Northeastern areas and the numbers are showing far more  
77 success than print ads. Sarah Imes: Motor Coach tours have been a key element in the current focus on  
78 expanding mid-week traffic. A September Ithaca culinary tour is expected to book 60 room nights and will  
79 be the third tour this year.

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81 Jodi LaPierre noted the two-day closing of the Visitors Centers which allowed staff to attend a retreat which  
82 focused on new ideas. CAP has asked the CVB to take over the Ithacaevents.com website to take  
83 advantage of economies of scale with the visitithaca.com overhaul, and they are planning to pursue this.  
84 Focuses on branding are in the works with some possible font and size changes.

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86 Mary Rachun shared recent analysis showing that the Tompkins County lodging industry experienced  
87 significant growth between 2000 and 2013 with an increase in room supply of 42% and an increase in room  
88 rates of 65%, compared to a national increase in rates of 39%. Estimated revenues increased from \$23.5  
89 million in 2000 to \$49.5 million in 2013, an increase of 110%. Occupancy has only slightly declined. An  
90 estimated additional 16,000 room nights sold a year, or 300 mid-week rooms per week, will take away a  
91 widening gap between room supply and room sales. This would move occupancy from 59% up to 62%.  
92 Some suggestions for increasing mid-week stays were motor coach tours, meetings and conferences.

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94 **STPB Budget Committee** – Rick Adie asked members to provide input on the direction of the 2015  
95 budget. The STPB Budget Committee met with administrators to discuss trends in the lodging industry as  
96 well as programmatic trends and opportunities. New hotel construction is still on the horizon. A new 70  
97 room hotel may be constructed on Elmira Road possibly in late fall of 2015. Hotel Ithaca will feature 60 new  
98 rooms and will include a convention/meeting center. The Marriot at the east end of the Commons has a 16  
99 month construction schedule and is expected to break ground this year. The Ithaca Commons projected  
100 completion date is November of 2014. PKF provided projections for Tompkins County which were for 7.7%  
101 revenue growth in 2014 and 7.1% growth in 2015. So the industry is expected to remain healthy but the  
102 County has a \$60,000 obligation to TCAD in 2015 out of room tax and \$30K is needed to replenish room  
103 tax reserves back to 3% of revenues. So this expected growth in room tax not expected to be available to  
104 tourism programs.

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106 Members were asked to provide guidance to the budget committee about the importance of setting funds  
107 aside in 2015 for strategic tourism implementation. Discussion included mention of the importance of  
108 implementing the new Wayfinding Strategy and the possibility of redoing the Chmura study. The budget  
109 committee will work up guidance for program administrators.

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111 **Ag & Culinary Tourism Taskforce Report** – Rita Rosenberg: A wide variety of community members  
112 related to Ag & Culinary had their first meeting to begin developing an implementation plan for ag & culinary  
113 tourism. The meeting explored strengths, opportunities, and challenges in the local ag and culinary tourism  
114 field. Ethan Ash: the task force is in the process of developing a 5 year plan by the end of 2014. To be  
115 included with the report will be a stakeholders list and list of local assets.

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117 **Announcement**

118 Upcoming tourism grant-funded events were highlighted and members were encouraged to attend. Tom and  
119 Mike Mellor developed an online feedback form. Please use it to share information with other STPB  
120 members about your experience. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/STPBeventfeedback>

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122 With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:45pm

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124 Respectfully Submitted,  
125 Jennifer Turner, Administrative Assistant  
126 Tompkins County Planning Department

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128 **Next Meeting Scheduled**  
129 Wednesday, May 21, 2014 at the State Theatre of Ithaca