

Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB) Meeting Minutes – May 16, 2012

Date: May 16, 2012
Time: 3:00-5:00pm
Location: Convention and Visitor's Bureau

Attendees:

Name	✓	Representation	Name	✓	Representation
Anne Kellerman	✓	At-Large	Sue Perlgut	✓	Arts-Culture
Anthony Hopson	✓	Ithaca College, Vice-Chair	Sue Stafford	✓	TC3
Beverly Baker	✓	At-Large	Susie Monagan	✓	Arts-Culture
David Sparrow	✓	At-Large, Chair	Tim Joseph	✓	At-Large
Ethan Ash	Exc	Arts-Culture	VACANT		At-Large
Gary Stewart	✓	Cornell	Brett Bossard	✓	CAP, Non-Voting
Jon Reis	✓	Arts-Culture	Fred Bonn	✓	CVB, Non-Voting
Ken Jupiter	✓	At-Large	Gary Ferguson	✓	DIA, Non-Voting
Paul Tatar	✓	Recreation	Jean McPheeters	✓	Chamber, Non-Voting
Rick Adie	✓	Lodging	Martha Armstrong	✓	TCAD, Non-Voting
Rita Rosenberg	✓	Agriculture	Will Burbank	✓	TC Legislature, Non-Voting
Scott Wiggins	Exc	Lodging	VACANT		Transportation, Non-Voting
Stuart Stein	Exc	At-Large	Tom Knipe	✓	Staff

Also in attendance: Ronda Roaring, Samantha Smith, Kathy Wilsea (Tompkins County Planning Dept.)

Agenda

1. Approval of minutes for April, 2012 STPB meeting
2. Chair's report
3. Budget Committee report
4. Caroline Community Project
5. Strategic Tourism Plan Draft – Member Discussion
6. April CVB Report

Call to Order – The meeting was called to order at 3:05 PM by the Chair, David Sparrow.

Discussion

1. Approval of minutes for May, 2012 STPB meeting – April minutes were corrected to reflect Sue Stafford was excused. With that change, April minutes were approved unanimously.

2. Chair's report -- David Sparrow reported that STPB Bylaws updates passed at PDEQ, but were withdrawn prior to presentation going to the County Legislature. Legislator Dooley Kiefer wanted to provide edits. Two changes were of substance, and changes were provided to members. Article Five, Section 3, Voting was changed to "...but in no case shall a resolution be passed with fewer than **six** members voting in the affirmative." Also, Article Two, Section 1, Powers and Duties was changed to "To develop a tourism policy for review and adoption by the Tompkins County Legislature. **The policy shall be developed with input from members of the community who are interested in and informed about local tourism development, and shall** address all issues raised by reports and information pertinent to all aspects of tourism development." Changes moved by Paul Tatar, seconded by Jon Reis and passed by unanimous voice vote.

David's report continued with the announcement that a Marketing and Advertising grant application for the Scottish Games was not reviewed in the spring grant round due to a blameless mix-up in the receipt of the application. Fred Bonn has arranged for the CVB to match \$1,500 of marketing for the Scottish Games.

Budget Committee Report – Rick Adie provided a chart of the budget forecast summary. Rick reviewed the methodology for projected room tax revenue growth and impact on Tourism Program reserves. There were no questions from members on methodology. Uncollected room taxes from 2011 were determined to be a non-factor in terms of re-forecasting 2012 revenues and setting the 2013 revenue figure. The

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renovation of the Holiday Inn, leading to its partial closure from November 2012 until Spring 2013 will be a neutral factor in room tax revenues next year because of growth of supply elsewhere in the market.

Some funds will be put aside for issues identified in the Strategic Plan where the Tourism Program can have direct impact. The Budget Committee will meet 5/31 with grant committee chairs and program administrators, and further on 6/13.

Comments: Fred liked the strategy of addressing issues of the Strategic Plan with a budget allocation. Tom Knipe asked members to send him any comments about the possible parameters for allocation of Strategic Tourism Plan Implementation funds that were shared with the May agenda packet. The Planning and Evaluation Committee will help work out the details of how these funds are to be applied for and allocated. Rick pointed out that Tompkins County is recovering from the recession more quickly than the rest of the country. Average room rates are increasing here, but are still down nationwide. Our occupancy rate also is higher.

Caroline Community Project – Rita Rosenberg and Samantha Smith provided information on the Farm & Garden Extravaganza (GadZukes!) that will occur in July, based at the Brooktondale Community Center. This model is supported by CVB and Cornell Cooperative Extension. Visitors can visit participating farms and gardens by walking, biking, or by automobile. (The greatest planned trip circumference is 17 miles.) The organizers hope to attract people from outside Tompkins County. A grant from Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County will help cover costs, and organizers are requesting donations from participants.

Strategic Tourism Plan Draft – Member Discussion – Tom Knipe shared information on performance indicators and possible actions. The Planning & Evaluation Committee met to work on critical actions, and applied filters such as whether the action can be implemented by the Tourism Program, and whether it is specific enough so that we could actually identify success/completion. This allowed them to do some grouping of actions. Today's goal is to approve content, then the document will go through a public comment period. Tom suggested that the discussions focus on points of policy relevance, as opposed to language edits, which he encouraged members to continue to send him via email. Members wanted to know what would be STPB involvement in revitalizing downtown; how we can tell people what the Plan entails, but do it briefly (what is the "elevator speech?"); how to describe STPB support for the Finger Lakes Wine Center; provide descriptions of measurable goals; clarify whether we are promoting Tompkins County as destination for LGBT weddings; and does our recommendation for waterfront development get into what we can and can't do there.

- During discussion on support for downtown, Jean McPheeters moved to used phrase "support the Commons through financing, advocacy and collaboration. . ." Seconded by Ken Jupiter, passed by voice vote with one abstention (Hopson).
- Discussion also focused on support for the Finger Lakes Wine Center, for example, and how specific our support should be for this one project. Should there be any attempt should to have topic descriptions be similar in length in the Plan, and should language be sufficiently general enough to be flexible? Martha Armstrong suggested language such as "Support FLWC to continue to grow Ithaca as the gateway to the Finger Lakes wine region."
- Tim Joseph said he also serves on the Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance board, where the idea of promotion of the region as an LGBT destination was brought for consideration, but voted down. There was agreement by STPB that Tompkins County can do this successfully with simultaneous development of our product as an LGBT destination and identification of friendly facilities.
- Gary Ferguson raised the issues of support for waterfront enterprise. There are many aspects of business being allowed on the waterfront, but few that STPB can address directly. Maybe the addition of an advocacy phrase to the Plan embracing: support for the limited opportunities is a good idea. Tom said the anticipated Phase II of the Cayuga Lakes Blueway Trail would involve site development for paddlers. Fred wondered if we should mention Hydrilla in any way. Martha said it is not a critical action step, but

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we might need some reference in the strategy in order to get grant money. Jean pointed out some issues raise serendipity, opportunity and challenge: there are not a lot of commercially developable sites on the waterfront.

Tom moved on to structural issues for the plan. We need to develop baseline figures related to the “measurable objectives” so that we can track our progress. This will be developed after the plan is adopted. Focus Areas fall into Established, Emerging, and Foundation (page 27). Anne voiced concern about the focus areas varying so much in length, and suggested having “Ithaca is Gorges” first. Right now they are in alphabetical order, not by any priority. Rick suggested matching the order of the Chmura report. Brett pointed out that document design will help. Gary Ferguson suggested members consider taking Anne’s point broader – people will make their own “Reader’s Digest” version around the issues that they care most about, and press and politicians will try to give snapshots. Do we want to point out key messages now or later? Beverly Baker reiterated tourism begins with beautification and signage (page 40), and we need a presence near State & Meadow. The committee did not discuss location of Visitor Services as part of this critical action.

- Returning to the FLWC, there was discussion on wording. Rita moved to accept “support and develop FLWC as the gateway to the Finger Lakes wine region trails”, and accepted as a friendly amendment changing that to “. . . wine region”. The motion was seconded by Sue Stafford and passed by unanimous voice vote.

Announcement – Because Sue Stafford needed to leave, she shared information about the Hospitality Star event which will take place 6/19 – 20. It is free of charge to people in the industry and job seekers, but all need to register.

Strategic Tourism Plan Draft (continued) – Tom asked if there was support to put the draft out to the public prior to additional board review, and there were no objections. Design edits will begin shortly; Brett Bossard has agreed to help with this. The outreach strategy will mirror the January workshop, with contact of tourism partners, issue of a press release, and the plan being made available to view online.

April CVB Report – Fred Bonn reported Fairfield Inn is under construction, and he is hearing chatter about Hotel Ithaca proceeding, too. The CVB is receiving many job applications for the Integrated Marketing Manager opening, and he hopes to have someone on board by 7/1. He is working with a translator to come up with “Ithaca is Gorges” in Chinese. He heard this morning that AARP placed Ithaca in their list of “Quirky Places to Retire”.

Announcement – Brett will have “arts & prosperity” data 6/8 and will do a press release concerning that.

With no further business, David Sparrow declared the meeting adjourned at 4:45pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Wilsea, Secretary
Tompkins County Planning Dept.
Adopted by STPB 6/20/2012

Next Meetings Scheduled

Wednesday, June 20 – 3pm

Wednesday, July 18 – 3pm