

Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB) Meeting Minutes

Date: June 15, 2011
Time: 3:00-5:00pm
Location: Convention and Visitor's Bureau

Attendees

Name	✓	Representation	Name	✓	Representation
Anne Kellerman	✓	At-Large	Stuart Stein	✓	At-Large
Anthony Hopson		Ithaca College, Vice-Chair	Sue Perlgut	✓	Arts-Culture
Beverly Baker	✓	At-Large	Sue Stafford	✓	TC3
David Sparrow	✓	At-Large, Chair	Susie Monagan	✓	Arts-Culture
Debbie Teeter	✓	Agriculture	Tim Joseph	✓	At-Large
Gary Stewart	✓	Cornell	Todd Miner		At-Large
Jean McPheeters	✓	Chamber	Brett Bossard	✓	CAP, Non-Voting
Jon Reis	✓	Arts-Culture	Carol Chock	✓	Legislature, Non-Voting
Ken Jupiter	✓	At-Large	Fred Bonn	✓	CVB, Non-Voting
Marrie Neumer	✓	Arts-Culture	Gary Ferguson	✓	IDA, Non-Voting
Paul Tatar	✓	Recreation	Jackie Kippola	✓	Staff
Rick Adie	✓	Lodging	Martha Armstrong		TCAD, Non-Voting
Scott Wiggins	✓	Lodging	Tom Knipe	✓	Staff

Also in attendance: Rick Manning, Vicki Armstrong, et al (Friends of Forest Park representatives), Jeanne Lecesse (Creating Healthy Places grant, Health Planning Council), Claudia Brenner (architect).

Agenda

1. Welcome to Tom Knipe, Senior Planner / Tourism Coordinator
2. Chair's Report – David Sparrow
3. Approve May 2011 minutes – to be distributed
4. Downtown Strategic Plan – Gary Ferguson
5. Stewart Park update – Scott Wiggins & Rick Manning
6. CVB Report – Fred Bonn

Discussion

1. Welcome to Tom Knipe – Tom's contact info: 607-274-5575 (direct), tknipe@tomkins-co.org.

2. Chair's Report - The 2012 budget approval process is delayed. On July 6, PDEQ will review the 2012 recommended budget and supplemental requests. There has been a growth in reserve funds due to combination of factors. There are currently an estimated \$194,000 of reserve funds available for the Tourism Program's use. Fred Bonn asked about the opportunity for program administrators to make supplemental requests for staff salary enhancement in light of the availability of greater reserve funds. David Sparrow suggested that program administrators submit supplemental requests after our presentation of the 2012 budget to PDEQ in July.

3. May Minutes – Minutes approved with a small language revision.

4. Stewart Park presentation

Rick Manning presented a plan to rehabilitate Stewart Park. Scott Wiggins, Claudia Brenner, Jeanne Lecesse and Vicki Armstrong assisted. They gave the history of Stewart Park in four phases, and describe their vision for park buildings, landscape projects and restoration. Specifically, the plan envisions:

- Restoring the Cascadilla Boat House,
- Rebuilding the Small Pavilion,
- Restoring the Wharton Studio building (to house the Ithaca Motion Picture Project),
- Constructing a new maintenance building new the park entrance,
- Redeveloping the parking area between the Large Pavilion and Wharton Studio into a "performance pier" community concert venue,

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- Restoring the Large Pavilion (windows and doors), and creating an addition to house Ithaca Youth Bureau storage,
- Developing a new playground facility,
- Fixing up the Concession Building, and
- Restoring the Stewart Memorial Flag Pole Garden (community builds planned for this summer).

A board is in place, 501c3 incorporation is underway for a Friends of Stewart Park organization, and they have a goal of raising \$10 million over 3 years to implement the plan. No action taken.

5. Gary Ferguson – Presentation on Downtown Ithaca Alliance (DIA) Strategic Plan

Gary provided background on the relationship of tourism to downtown and then reviewed the fundamental concepts of the plan and specific recommendations related to tourism. Downtown is major destination. Several basic concepts emerged from the public process: The Commons as hub, in-fill, clustered destinations, downtown as the community center, and sustainability. The big idea of the plan: downtown should be linked and connected to its neighbors through 1) a rebuilt Commons (economic development, transit hub, safety, new infrastructure), 2) an enhanced transit spine (Commons-Cornell-IC-waterfront), and 3) 1,500 units of housing. Redevelopment sites are available.

The Commons is a major tourist amenity, but does not currently serve that interest well. Regarding transit, the plan calls for busses first, maybe graduating to streetcars. TCAT has asked: “what’s wrong with what we have: #10 is the top route”, but it doesn’t serve tourists well. TCAT is currently researching this and the results will be presented to community. Housing would be concentrated in transit development corridors. Other items in the DIA strategic plan specifically related to tourism:

- Build ability to close off State Street (West of The Commons) more easily.
- Add up to 10 new pedestrian traffic generators.
- Complete Six-Mile Creek trail and walk.
- Create a new downtown multi-use meeting center. (Fred Bonn added that we should know how this would be paid for and sustained.)
- Develop a university/community downtown welcome center.
- Develop 1-2 additional hotels.
- Create design guidelines for downtown.

Fred Bonn commented on Chmura’s findings related to The Commons; they showed up as something that tourists both “liked” and that “didn’t meet expectations”. Thus it is important to tourism to improve this asset. A member asked about impediments to downtown getting funding. There were no shovel-ready projects for stimulus funding and we have not applied for transit money. No action taken.

6. CVB report – Fred Bonn - report attached

Tye tours: they are convening in NH, bringing tour planners into Ithaca. Their clients are largely from New England. Why are Smith Travel Numbers down? It has been cold and wet. Trends in room rates are up 10% over last year, but still rebounding from two years of declines. A member asked about ROI on Facebook investments. The conversion study will try to get at this. The available metrics are “likes”, cost per fan, level of engagement, and whether we can use the page to begin to sell product. We have 2,000 “likes”. At 5,000 “likes”, the CVB will try to push out a promotion. The consumer is beginning to use Facebook as a search tool. The VisitIthaca site outperformed two other cities on response time to a general inquiry, although there may still be room to improve.

7. Discussion of Tom Knipe, new Senior Planner/Tourism Coordinator was postponed to the July meeting.

Next Meetings Scheduled

Wednesday, July 20 – CVB

Wednesday, August 17 – CVB