

## Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB) Meeting Minutes – June 2012

**Date:** June 20, 2012  
**Time:** 3:00-5:00pm  
**Location:** Convention and Visitor's Bureau

**Attendees:**

Name	✓	Representation	Name	✓	Representation
Anne Kellerman	✓	At-Large	Sue Perlgut	exc	Arts-Culture
Anthony Hopson	exc	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	✓	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	exc	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	✓	Lodging	VACANT		Transportation, Non-Voting
Stuart Stein	✓	At-Large	Tom Knipe	✓	Staff

**Also in attendance:** Philly DeSarno (City of Ithaca), Carol Kammen (Community Celebrations Committee Chair), Jennifer Kusznir (City), Svante Myrick (City), Diana Riesman (IMPP), Ronda Roaring (ILovetheFingerLakes.com), Rommia White (LaTourelle intern), Kathy Wilsea (Tompkins County Planning Dept.), Todd Zwigard (IMPP Architect)

**Agenda**

Approval of minutes for May, 2011 STPB meeting  
 Chair's report  
 Ithaca Commons Redesign Presentation  
 IMPP Presentation  
 2013 Tourism Budget Committee Recommendation – Discussion  
 May CVB Report

**Discussion**

**The meeting was called to order at 3:12 PM.** Visitor introductions were made.

**May minutes** were approved unanimously without change.

**Chair's Report** was moved to the end of the meeting.

**Ithaca Commons Redesign Presentation** – Mayor Svante Myrick presented a slide show and spoke of the plans for the Commons. The mission is to strengthen the Commons as the core of the City by seeking more housing, hotels and people. The infrastructure is now under the middle of the Commons, but the fun things – trees, playgrounds, stages – are also in the middle. Changes would be made while infrastructure is updated. Moving the trees to the sides will provide a clear view down the center. Plans include one pavilion in Bank Alley at Seneca Street, a water play area, and improved signage. The Commons is important because it is a community icon, nationally known feature, central community gathering place, commercial and employment hub, transportation hub, and major visitor destination. Fred Bonn pointed out that visitors sometimes report they have been disappointed with their trip to the Commons, so he feels it is at a tipping point regarding living up to expectations. Mayor Myrick said development proposals for hotels, housing and mixed use will bring more visitors, and acknowledged that the Holiday Inn

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renovations, which include a convention center, will bring visitors in the middle of the week. Funding is still needed for the Commons project, with the current gap at \$0.5 million. To be successful, the project needs broad-based community support and community participation.

During discussion, Mayor Myrick said that the City should find out soon, maybe next week, if federal funds are secured. Most applications are for transportation program funds. If sufficient funds are secured, groundbreaking will be in spring 2013. The City is also applying for funding through the current CFA round. A presentation has not yet been made to County Legislature members who represent City residents, nor to elected officials of towns. Mayor Myrick acknowledged the need to be clear to the public on infrastructure, aesthetics, and management plans. A design approval timeline will be determined when funding is approved. Cornell staff are helping with contacts with the Southern Tier Economic Development Council.

**Ithaca Motion Picture Project Presentation** – Diana Riesman provided a brief history of silent movies in Ithaca, and IMPP's plans for a museum in Stewart Park. Over 100 silent films were produced here at Wharton Studio in then-Renwick Park. The building is currently used for storage by the City, and is one of a handful of silent movie studios still in existence. Ithaca's Board of Public Works recently voted unanimously to support the plan of IMPP, and IMPP also has the support of many area businesses. They feel this museum can help revitalize Stewart Park. Todd Zwigart showed an architect's rendering of the design, which adds a second floor to the front of the building; creates an entrance, café and gift/book shop; provides natural light in the main space by adding dormers, and creates an iconic element to show modern use of a historic building by adding a digital marquee and programmable exterior screens. The plaza will also function as parking and fire lane.

**2013 Tourism Budget Committee Recommendations** – Committee Chair Rick Adie reviewed the process. At the STPB meeting last month, he spoke of projections for 2013. Program Administrators and Committee Chairs submitted requests to the Budget Committee through use of a uniform format which committee members found very useful. Submissions included priorities and what would be cut if the overall request was not fully funded. All program committee requests were included in the agenda packet, along with a summary chart. Rick reviewed the summary chart and stated that recommendations are scheduled to be discussed at PDEQ on July 11. The Budget Committee recommends a set aside of funds for implementation of the Strategic Tourism Plan and maintenance of 4.2% in reserves.

There was discussion about which side of the 60/40 New Tourism Initiatives are funded – Brett Bossard said he had not realized before that NTI funds come from the 60% marketing portion of the funds. Tom Knipe pointed out that many of our programs act on both sides of this split. Also, as indicated in the Strategic Tourism Plan, the STPB has indicated that they wish to revisit this formula, but not as part of the 2013 budget process. Fred Bonn asked for the Committee members' thinking on recommending CVB receive a 2% increase, as opposed to the 3.1% requested. Members responded that this is the largest overall amount in the budget, and commented on the Teachers' Winter Recess program. Also the amount of budget growth available in aggregate to existing programs (not including the County allocation) was 2.7%, even as the total budget increase was 3% (not including Strategic Tourism Plan Implementation). Scott Wiggins was supportive of providing adequate funding to the CVB as it is the resource that makes new hotels, festivals and programming successful. Fred expects to apply for some of the funds set aside for Strategic Tourism Plan implementation, and pointed out that media is costing more. He will soon hire an Integrated Marketing Manager with new baseline salary. The CVB recently performed a wage comparative analysis and determine that their wage structure is competitive. Tim Joseph pointed out that the work of the CVB is valued, but that some other programs got no

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increase from 2012. While the CVB didn't receive the largest percentage increase, it received the largest dollar increase. The Budget Committee has to make recommendations. A member could move to modify the budget prior to adoption. David announced STPB will vote on the budget at the July meeting. He also stated that large sum that is set aside for Strategic Tourism Plan Implementation could stream into some of these existing programs.

**May CVB Report** – Fred Bonn provided hard copies of his report. The Holiday Inn had a successful appeal to the Board of Public Works and the renovation project will advance. Fred expects to finish staff interviews and make a decision by 7/6. A new search engine provides the ability to separate mobile traffic from desktop version traffic for statistics, and actually shows growth when taken in this format. A group sales familiarization tour has been set for September. Hospitality Stars conference is taking place this week, with 30 registrants, which is the highest number to date. In operating the downtown kiosk, staff members have found themselves in a different environment. Although it's not really dangerous, an Ithaca Police officer is doing an in-service training to help them learn how to cope with the public on that level. According to the Tourism Economics study for 2011, Tompkins shows sustainable growth. Counties on the Pennsylvania border have stronger growth, because of gas drilling over the border. La Tourelle and August Moon Spa have provided a great package to be used as a prize. And despite not having a river, Ithaca is a nominee for Outside Magazine's Best River Town Ever.

**Chair's Report** – STPB Bylaws were adopted by the Legislature as a part of its Consent Agenda at the June 19 meeting. We are looking forward to a report from the Festivals Committee very soon, postponed this month because of our crowded agenda. STPB minutes and agendas are available at <http://www.tompkins-co.org/tourism/STPBinformation.htm>

**Announcements** – Rita Rosenberg invited all to the Caroline Farm & Garden Extravaganza on 7/28 and hopes they will spread the word. She provided promo cards to be shared. Jon Reis reminded members there are upcoming projects that were grant-supported: Scottish Games and Dragonboat Festival. Susie Monagan added the Shakespeare Festival. Scott announced a planting event on Saturday at Stewart Park around the flagpole. The next project for Stewart Park will be a children's playground, being designed with input of Discovery Trail partners. Tom announced the Strategic Tourism Plan is out for public comment through July 16, and asked members to share that fact.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:50pm.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Kathy Wilsea, Secretary  
Tompkins County Planning Department

Approved by STPB on August 15, 2012

**Next Meetings Scheduled**

Wednesday, July 18 – 3pm

Wednesday, August 22 – 3pm