

**Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB)
Draft Meeting Minutes – August 2011 (approved 9/17/11)**

Date: August 17, 2011
Time: 3:00-4:15pm
Location: Finger Lakes Wine Center, 237 S. Cayuga St., Ithaca

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
Gary Stewart	✓	Cornell	Tim Joseph		At-Large
Jean McPheeters		Chamber	Todd Miner	✓	At-Large
Jon Reis		Arts-Culture	Brett Bossard	✓	CAP, Non-Voting
Ken Jupiter	✓	At-Large	Carol Chock	✓	Legislature, Non-Voting
Paul Tatar	✓	Recreation	Fred Bonn		CVB, Non-Voting
Rick Adie	✓	Lodging	Gary Ferguson	✓	DIA, Non-Voting
Scott Wiggins	✓	Lodging	Martha Armstrong	✓	TCAD, Non-Voting
			Tom Knipe	✓	Staff

Also in attendance: Roxanne Ravago., Kathy Wilsea

Agenda

- Chair's report
- Approval of July 11, 2011 minutes
- Finger Lakes Wine Center presentation by Sue Lonergan, Exec. Dir.
- Tourism Coordinator Report
- Nominating and Bylaws committee report

The meeting was called to order by the Chair, David Sparrow, at 3 PM, and he noted there are two members excused today and two vacant seats. Tom Knipe introduced Kathy Wilsea, Secretary for Tompkins County Planning Department, who will take minutes at STPB meetings. Gary Stewart introduced Roxanne Ravago, who is a student intern in Gary's office.

Chair's Report

The County Legislature's PDEQ Committee passed the STPB budget on 8/3 with few questions. Debbie Teeter has resigned from the STPB Agriculture seat. A report was requested on the Tourism Partner Awards program. Rick Adie reported that the award funds budgeted in 2009 and 2010 were not encumbered, so STPB must go through the process of having the funds allocated again. He and Tom Knipe will work to set up a September meeting to work on this award. Rick invited interested STPB members to join. Tom provided some history, saying the award is for volunteers who bring in large groups to Ithaca for events or conferences. It's a chance to offer a "thank you" and provide publicity. In the past, it has also included having a paver stone installed in the Cayuga Lake Waterfront Trail near the Chamber of Commerce. Rick said many local people belong to national groups and travel elsewhere for meetings and conventions, and some also try to get the groups to meet here. Carol Chock noted that there should be a category for industry partners. Brett Bossard pointed out this is different from the Culligan Award, which is from the Chamber of Commerce.

Carol said the Tourism group of the Governor's new regional economic development council has already begun meeting. Fred Bonn and Brett Bossard will serve on the Tourism Committee, Gary Ferguson and Ithaca Mayor Carolyn Peterson are on the Cities Committee, and Tom Knipe said Ed Marx is on the Agriculture committee. It is not clear yet how or when any funds will be distributed. Martha Armstrong pointed out that four regions of ten will get selected in November through a competitive process to receive 80% of the \$200 million total. Paul Tatar said he will be meeting with State Senator Tom O'Mara in the fall and welcomes topics for discussion with him from other STPB members. According to Carol, the total pot for these regional councils replaces old programs, and it is not clear yet which programs are being ended. Scott

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Wiggins said Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance will meet on Monday with NYS tourism officials. He can ask how tourism fits in to the overall economy, which programs will require matching funds, etc. He reviewed the expected participants and welcomed other STPB members to attend and carpool with him.

Minutes

The draft minutes of the July 20, 2011 meeting were moved by Scott Wiggins, seconded by Todd Miner and accepted without change.

Finger Lakes Wine Center

Susan Lonergan, Executive Director, said visitors are captivated by the Wine Center. She said the Wine Center does not intend to compete with wineries, and was built to be different. The map on the wall depicts the wine region at the approximate time of the founding of the first winery. The Center's business plan is still evolving. They opened in late fall 2010, which is a difficult time for a tourism kickoff. They focused on pushing the Center as an event location, and now have hosted 52 events, each of which has generated another event. The events range from wedding rehearsal dinners and birthday parties through alumni and student events. AAA Atlantic Region magazine had an article on the Center and FL wines, and 80% of visitors over the following three weekends mentioned that article. Center staff helps visitors map out winery tours and include theatre, restaurant and hotel information. Visitors have come from 17 states, and the Center expects to log around 18,000 visitors in its first year. They hold a wine bar night on Fridays, located at the Center during winter months and at a tent on the Commons in the summer.

During the discussion period, Sue Lonergan said providing recommendations is a key service, and they do it by discussing interests (atmosphere, desire for individual attention, preferred type of wine, timeframe) and do some tastings. They have a close relationship with CVB and they continue to look at ways the Center and CVB can complement each other. Based on a CVB event for tour operators, four tours have been booked this fall to the Center. The Center does not have as much signage as they hope for, but visitors from out of town use GPS, and the Center has permission to add flags and some lettering on the awning. The existing sidewalk tables with umbrellas get some attention. They hope for more walkers from the Commons, but there is nothing of interest between the Commons and the Center. While it is not their intention to compete with wineries, visitors who do not have time for tours can purchase wine by the bottle, and they have even arranged for pickup of cases.

Coordinator's Report

Tom Knipe reviewed some of the documents that had been provided with the agenda pack. The reserves chart was presented to PDEQ on 8/3, and he thought it provided a summary that would be of interest to STPB members. Tom has talked with the County Finance Director and County Attorney about collection of hotel tax arrears from one hotel operator, a topic brought up last month. Both departments are aggressively pursuing payment, and the County recently received a partial payment. The amount of the unpaid tax accounts for the lower than expected hotel occupancy tax revenues in Quarters 1 and 2 of 2011. There was discussion about which types of lodgers are supposed to pay hotel taxes, and that does include B&Bs and informal rentals (at 3%). But Scott Wiggins pointed out there are no collections unless the lodger is registered with the County, so it is a difficult problem to rein in. Scott also pointed out some visitors are tax exempt, and that is hard to track. Tom continued with his report, saying the Grants Workshop for the Tompkins County Tourism Program will be held 9/14 at 3pm at the CVB. A fall round of STPB grants is being planned, and Tom noted there are no funds available in several grant categories for the fall round including New Tourism Initiatives, ACOD and Tourism Capital Grants. He invited ideas for publicizing the grant round. He will produce a grant cover sheet for potential applicants, and in the future try for a uniform application for the four types he works with (Martha Armstrong does capital grant applications at TCAD; Brett Bossard handles ACOD at CAP). Members suggested looking for some software that would allow sharing of confidential materials and aid them in reviewing applications.

Nominating and Bylaws Committee report

The committee chair was excused from today's meeting. Tom Knipe provided the report. The committee met earlier this week and looked at bylaws revisions, eligibility, and nominations for vacancies. The committee discussed writing the conflict of interest policy into the bylaws, and Tom is discussing that with the County Legislature office. Tom reviewed the conflict of interest section in the standards of conduct for County employees, which also applies to appointees. According to STPB policy, members may serve but

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must disclose any potential conflict of interest. Scott Wiggins said although the policy says “may or may not” participate in discussion, in the past the board has generally requested a member not participate in discussion on grant applications for an organization they are associated with. David Sparrow pointed out much discussion went into establishing the policy in 2009. Scott said some members may be affected by term limits this year. David welcomed recommendations from those members for replacements. Carol stated the County urges advisory boards to have public and widespread recruiting. The County has a specific goal to increase diversity. Tom Knipe said STPB had nine applicants for the Arts/Culture seat, and that an initial round of interviews is to be conducted on 8/31. An announcement is being crafted for the vacant agriculture seat, and there was discussion on outreach for filling the seat.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:15pm.

Next Meetings Scheduled

Wednesday, September 21 – 3pm – Cornell Plantations, Nevins Welcome Center (COE van available for transport from the CVB at 2:30pm)

Wednesday, October 19 – 3pm -- CVB