

**Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB)
Final Approved Meeting Minutes – November 2013**

1 **Date:** November 20, 2013
 2 **Time:** 3:00-4:30pm
 3 **Location:** Convention and Visitor's Bureau
 4
 5

Attendees:

Name	✓	Representation	Name	✓	Representation
Anne Kellerman	✓	At-Large	Mike Mellor	✓	At-Large
Anthony Hopson	✓	Ithaca College	Susie Monagan	E	Arts-Culture
Christy Agnese	A	At-Large			
Ethan Ash	✓	Arts-Culture	<i>John Spence</i>	✓	<i>CAP, Non-Voting</i>
Gary Stewart	✓	Cornell	<i>Bruce Stoff</i>	✓	<i>CVB, Non-Voting</i>
Jon Reis	✓	Arts-Culture	<i>Dwight Mengel</i>	A	<i>Transportation, Non-Voting</i>
Miriam Musco	✓	At-Large	<i>Gary Ferguson</i>	✓	<i>DIA, Non-Voting</i>
Paul Tatar	✓	Recreation	<i>Jean McPheeters</i>	✓	<i>Chamber, Non-Voting</i>
Rick Adie	✓	Lodging	<i>Martha Armstrong</i>	✓	<i>TCAD, Non-Voting</i>
Rita Rosenberg	✓	Agriculture	<i>Will Burbank</i>	✓	<i>TC Legislature, Non-Voting</i>
Scott Wiggins	✓	Lodging	<i>Anne Gossen</i>	A	<i>Associate Member</i>
Stephen Nunley	✓	At-Large	<i>Beverly Baker</i>	A	<i>Associate Member</i>
Steve Hugo	✓	At-Large	<i>Ken Jupiter</i>	A	<i>Associate Member</i>
Stuart Stein	✓	At-Large	<i>Tiffany Gallagher</i>	A	<i>Associate Member</i>
Sue Pergut	✓	Arts-Culture	Tom Knipe	✓	Staff
Sue Stafford	✓	TC3			

7

8 **Also in attendance:** Joseph Rodriguez (CVB Intern), Ronda Roaring
 9

10 **Agenda**

- 11 Approval of minutes for October, 2013 STPB meeting
- 12 Chair's Report
- 13 Privilege of the Floor
- 14 Nominating Committee – slate of 2014 officers
- 15 Online grant management system
- 16 Ticket Center Ithaca Closure
- 17 Planning and Evaluation Committee – Strategic Tourism Plan implementation status report
- 18 STPB process improvement
- 19 AirBnB and room tax
- 20 CVB Report
- 21 Tompkins County Wayfinding Strategy

22
 23 **Discussion**

24 **The meeting was called to order** at 3:00 PM.

25
 26 **October 2013 STPB meeting minutes were approved** without change.
 27

28 **Chair's Report:**

29 Mary Lou Szabol has moved on to other duties in the County and a new Administrative Assistant will be
 30 recruited. Tourism Partner Awards were approved by the EDC and Legislature. Fall 2013 Community
 31 Celebrations, New Tourism Initiative and Tourism Marketing and Advertising Grants were approved by EDC
 32 and the Legislature. New Members for 2014 were approved by EDC and the Legislature: Anne Gossen,
 33 Ken Jupiter, Lynnette Scofield, John Gutenberger, Ian Golden. Rick and Sue are planning one-on-one
 34 meetings with members of the board in December.
 35

36 **Nominating Committee – slate of 2014 officers**

37 The 2013 Nominating Committee was elected at the September 2013 STPB meeting and consists of Stu
 38 Stein, Anthony Hopson, Jon Reis and Scott Wiggins. Stu Stein put forward the Committee's recommended
 39 slate of officers for 2014 as Rick Adie for Chair and Sue Pergut for Vice-Chair. No other nominations were

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40 made. No vote was made; per STPB Bylaws, a vote to elect officers will take place at the first regular
41 meeting of the year.

42

43 **Online grant management system**

44 Tom Knipe presented a recommendation to form a partnership with the United Way of Tompkins County to
45 host the Tourism Program's grant systems online. This recommendation had been reviewed and approved
46 by a special subcommittee consisting of grant review committee chairs and grant program administrators. A
47 proposed scope of services was provided. The recommendation was made contingent on a satisfactory
48 conclusion of final due diligence research. The partnership would cost approximately \$2,600 (or slightly more
49 if additional hourly services are needed) in the first year, and \$1,500 in subsequent years. The cost is
50 recommended to be shared among participating tourism grant programs in 2014. Three programs would pilot
51 use of the new "Community Impact Manager" software in Spring 2013 (New Tourism Initiative, Tourism
52 Project and Tourism Marketing and Advertising Grants) with Tourism Capital Grants and Community
53 Celebrations to begin using it in subsequent grant rounds if the pilot is successful. A question was raised
54 about whether the expense could be taken out as an admin expense vs. taking it out of the grant programs;
55 this could be built in to the budget for years subsequent to 2014.

56

57 A motion was put forth by Martha Armstrong to "empower Tom Knipe to proceed with United Way to provide
58 the online application system for grant programs and that if he decides that another online application
59 software is a better fit, that he be empowered to make that choice, with the total cost not to exceed \$3,000 in
60 Year One and \$2,000 in consecutive years." Seconded by Scott Wiggins. No further discussion. The motion
61 passed unanimously by voice vote with no abstentions.

62

63 **Ticket Center Ithaca closure**

64 Tom presented recommendations for a financial response to the closure of Ticket Center Ithaca to mitigate
65 losses to the Community Arts Partnership. The recommended solution which involved discussion with all
66 effected parties was previously approved by the STPB Budget Committee and would reallocate \$24,324 from
67 the Arts and Culture Organizational Development (ACOD) Grant Program to Ticket Center Ithaca in the 2013
68 Tourism Program budget. A memo was provided in the agenda packet with additional details.

69

70 The impact on CVB rent for the Downtown Visitors Center is an outstanding, separate issue.

71

72 A motion to "accept the report and move forward with the taking funds from ACOD in the manner described
73 and remove the requirement that ACOD grant applicants use the Ticket Center since there is no longer a
74 Ticket Center and commend the CVB and others for stepping up to support a smooth transition" was made
75 by Jean McPheeters and approved by unanimous voice vote.

76

77 **Planning and Evaluation Committee – Strategic Tourism Plan implementation status report**

78 Tom reported on behalf of the Committee. The committee delivered a report detailing the implementation
79 status of the 2020 Strategic Tourism Plan. The report recommends four specific actions to be taken by the
80 STPB in 2014 to advance implementation of the Plan. These are:

- 81 1. Deconstruct the failure of the Finger Lakes Wine Center for lessons learned for the STPB and staff.
82 An initial investigation will be conducted by County staff, to be followed by STPB review.
- 83 2. Convene Ag & Culinary Tourism Working Group beginning in mid-2014 to develop a five year
84 culinary tourism strategy and implementation plan.
- 85 3. Convene Heritage Tourism Working Group to encourage implementation of heritage tourism related
86 actions articulated in the Plan.
- 87 4. Convene a Higher Ed Tourism Working Group with a proposed specific focus/charge in 2014 of
88 increasing the presence of visitor information about the community to campus visitors and increasing
89 the presence of campus information to general community visitors. Once underway, working group
90 members will primarily consist of boots-on-the-ground staff people, with engagement and support
91 from STPB higher-education representatives and other STPB members. A first meeting will be held
92 by early 2014 and focus on Ideation - clearly articulating desired outcomes, participants and process
93 for the new working group to ensure success.

94

95 There were also several areas for special staff action, including IthacaEvents.com optimization, CAP
96 deconstructing the closure of the Ticket Center, and Festivals Program recommendations.

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98 A motion to “accept the report by the P&E Committee and approve the recommendations for STPB action in
99 2014” was made by Scott Wiggins, seconded by Anne Kellerman. The motion carried by unanimous voice
100 vote with no abstentions.

101

102 **STPB Process Improvement**

103 In continuation of an ongoing discussion about board engagement, Ethan Ash described his interest in
104 supporting the STPB with a formal facilitated exercise at an early 2014 full board meeting to develop clear
105 work plans / implementation plans for committees of the STPB. Board members commented and expressed
106 general interest in spending time to develop clear expectations for the board in terms of roles,
107 responsibilities, board member engagement opportunities and opportunities to develop tactical plans for
108 implementing the strategic tourism plan. Ethan will move forward with putting together a workshop for the
109 board for early 2014.

110

111 **Tompkins County Wayfinding Strategy**

112 Draft vision and goals for the Wayfinding Strategy were distributed. Jean McPheeters reported that a
113 steering committee has been meeting, Laurene Gilbert has been hired by the Chamber as project manager
114 and has been very helpful and p.j.smith has been hired as consultant. The plan is proceeding according to
115 schedule. The consultants conducted two days of focus group meetings and a public meeting in the first
116 week of November. A choice between types of signage systems is an important next step, and the next
117 round of meetings and input session will be held in January, 2014.

118

119 **AirBnB and room tax**

120 Bruce Stoff introduced and thanked Joseph Rodriguez, an Ithaca College Student who has worked with the
121 CVB to analyze the possible financial impact of the use of AirBnB in Tompkins County, in terms of overall
122 lodging revenues and uncollected room tax. The result of this unique programming work, which pulls public
123 data off of the AirBnB site into format which can be analyzed, was shared. The CVB estimates that 183
124 properties listing through AirBnB are hosting paying guests in Tompkins County with more than 90% not
125 registered to pay room tax, 9,500–12,000 room nights booked annually, \$1.25–\$1.5 million in gross revenues
126 annually, and \$37,500 to \$45,000 in uncollected room tax annually (based on 3% room tax rate). This is
127 equivalent to about a 50 room hotel operating at 60% occupancy year-round.

128

129 The County and CVB will continue to work on educating users of AirBnB about the room tax law.

130

131 A policy question was brought to the STPB by the CVB and Chamber, which is “what is the definition of a
132 ‘bona-fide’ lodging property for the purposes of establishing which lodging entities the CVB is required (by its
133 contract with the County) to promote in its marketing?” This is an outstanding issue for which no simple
134 obvious answers have yet emerged within the existing policy or contract. In the meantime, the Chamber and
135 CVB are providing all the same services and marketing opportunities to any AirBnB member that registers
136 with the County as they would to any other hotel or accommodation. Tom Knipe and Bruce Stoff will work on
137 some possible approaches and report back.

138

139 With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:30pm for a reception honoring outgoing members Stu
140 Stein, Jon Reis, Scott Wiggins, Gary Stewart and Paul Tatar.

141

142 **Next Meeting Scheduled**

143 Wednesday, January 15, 2013