

# Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board

May 21, 2014

3:00 pm – 4:50 pm

**STATE THEATRE OF ITHACA**

## Meeting Agenda

### *Presentations on the Big Screen*

	<b>Minutes</b>
1. State Theatre Presentation– Doug Levine	15
2. Airport Presentation – Ewan Barr	20
3. Downtown Ithaca Presentation – Gary Ferguson	20

### *STPB Business*

#### *Move to seating on the State Theatre Stage*

4. March Meeting Minutes	2
5. Privilege of the Floor	3
6. Chair's Report – Rick Adie	5
7. Staff Report – Tom Knipe	5
8. CVB Monthly Report – Bruce Stoff	10
9. STPB Budget Committee Report	5
10. Coltivare Update	5
11. Ag & Culinary Tourism Task Force Report – Rita Rosenberg-Barber	5
12. Special STPB Committee to review ACOD program - FYI	5
13. Member comments on recently attended funded events	5

## **STPB Social to Follow at Lot 10, 106 S Cayuga St**

### Agenda Packet

- Draft April 2014 STPB Meeting Minutes
- CVB May 2014 Report

Next Meeting

June 18, 2014



### MISSION:

The Strategic Tourism Planning Board is charged by the Tompkins County Legislature with providing oversight and strategic direction for tourism initiatives that *promote economic development* and *enhance the quality of life* in Tompkins County.

**Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB)  
Meeting Minutes Draft – April 2014**

1 **Date:** April 16, 2014  
 2 **Time:** 3:00-4:30pm  
 3 **Location:** CVB / Chamber of Commerce  
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**Attendees:**

Name	✓	Representation	Name	✓	Representation
Anne Kellerman	✓	At-Large	Sue Perlgut	✓	Arts-Culture
Anthony Hopson	✓	Ithaca College	Susie Monagan	✓	Arts-Culture
Ian Golden	✓	Recreation	John Spence	A	CAP, Non-Voting
Ethan Ash	✓	Arts-Culture	Bruce Stoff	E	CVB, Non-Voting
John Gutenberger	✓	Cornell	Dwight Mengel	A	Transportation, Non-Voting
Lynette Scofield	A	Lodging	Gary Ferguson	A	DIA, Non-Voting
Rick Adie	✓	Lodging	Jean McPheeters	A	Chamber, Non-Voting
Rita Rosenberg	✓	Agriculture	Martha Armstrong	✓	TCAD, Non-Voting
Andy Zepp	A	At-Large	Will Burbank	E	TC Legislature, Non-Voting
Stephen Nunley	A	At-Large	Beverly Baker	A	Associate Member
Steve Hugo	E	At-Large	Carol Kammen	A	Associate Member
Ken Jupiter	A	At-Large	Jon Reis	A	Associate Member
Michael Mellor	✓	At-Large	Stuart Stein	A	Associate Member
Anne Gossen	✓	At-Large	Tom Knipe	✓	Staff
Sue Stafford	A	TC3	Jennifer Turner	✓	Staff
Christy Agnese	✓	At-Large			

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9 **Also in attendance:** Jodi La Pierre, Sarah Imes and Mary Rachun – **Convention and Visitors Bureau**

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11 **Agenda**

- 12 Opener  
 13 March Meeting Minutes  
 14 Privilege of the Floor  
 15 Chairs Report – Rick Adie  
 16 Staff Report – Tom Knipe  
 17 Tourism Capital Grant Recommendations – Martha Armstrong  
 18 Action – Recommend Tourism Capital Grants  
 19 STPB Budget Committee Report  
 20 Discussion  
 21 CVB Monthly Report – Jodi LaPierre, Mary Rachun  
 22 AG & Culinary Taskforce Report – Rita Rosenberg-Barber  
 23 Upcoming Tourism Program - Funded Events  
 24 And Collecting and Recording STPB Member Impressions

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26 **Discussion**

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28 **The meeting was called to order** at 3:06 PM.  
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30 **Opener:** Tom Knipe opened the meeting with an interactive exercise to engage the group in thinking about  
 31 their personal experience with visitor services. All members were encouraged to speak with another person  
 32 to get to know one another better and share experiences of a memorable trip that included experiences  
 33 where they were well taken care of.  
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35 **March 2014 STPB meeting minutes** were approved with no changes

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 37 **Chairs Report** – Rick Adie congratulated the Community Arts Partnership on a recent article which  
 38 featured the Ithaca Art Trail as one of the best art experiences outside of New York City. The May STPB  
 39 Meeting will take place at the State Theatre on May 21<sup>st</sup>.  
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**Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB)  
Meeting Minutes Draft – April 2014**

41 Staff Report

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- A new STPB resource library will be available soon on an FTP site and will include access to the budget and progress reports. Anne Kellerman has assisted with this project.
- The Spring 2014 tourism grants have passed the legislature. Members of the EDC had questions about why The Ithaca Festival was not among the applicants. Tom and Bruce both met with the new Ithaca Festival director to encourage them to apply in this round, but they did not come forward with an application. Tom will reach out to explore options with them again.
- The CVB's evaluation planning work is underway with support from Monica Hargraves and CCETC. The process will take about 4 months and the outcomes will include an evaluation plan, logic and pathway models for CVB programs and clear performance indicators for the CVB. Tom praised the CVB for stepping up to model this approach to program evaluation and expressed a goal to develop a culture of evaluation across the entire Tourism Program.
- Tom and Stu Stein have recruited members of the Heritage Tourism Task Force and the group will convene a first meeting soon.

**Tourism Capital Grant Recommendations** – Martha Armstrong announced that there are \$195,000 in funds in 2014 with \$95,000 already dedicated to previous year's awards. There were six new applications. The review panel tended to give priority to newer projects in their award recommendations.

Application	Request	Recommend	Recommend Years
Finger Lakes Reuse Center	9,698	0	2014
Tompkins Planning: Cayuga Blueway Trail: Design Study	18,000	10,000	2014
CSMA: 3 <sup>rd</sup> Floor Performance Space Capital Improvement Phase 1	55,134	55,000	31,000 – 2014 24,000 – 2015
Ithaca Children's Garden: Edible Forest Garden Phase 1	34,235	34,000	2014
PRI Cayuga Nature Center: Cayuga Lake Past and Present Exhibit	85,000	40,000	20,000 – 2014 10,000 – 2015 10,000 – 2016
Sciencenter Mini Golf Construction	100,000	25,000	0 – 2014 10,000 – 2015 15,000 – 2016
<b>Totals</b>	<b>302,067</b>	<b>164,000</b>	

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- Board members had questions about CSMA and their contributions to tourism. *Tourism-focused events such as Spring Writes, Winter Village Bluegrass Festival and the Fringe Festival already take place there, and the improvements will allow more events including some types of meetings to take place there.*
- Members also asked about the Sciencenter's ability to reconstruct a golf course that would draw more visitors. There were feelings that the room for improvement was too small and may not make a sizeable difference from its current state – *The Sciencenter emphasized the need to increase the span of years of interest in children and felt that if they made these upgrades it would keep youngsters interested into their teen years.*
- A member suggested that the Blueway Trail signage work be coordinated with the Wayfinding Strategy. *It is being coordinated.*

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74 **Convention & Visitors Bureau Report Highlights** – Mary Rachun: February was a robust month for the  
75 lodging industry with increases in revenue, rate and occupancy. The Farm to Fork grant was used for online  
76 display ads and YouTube video ads in key Northeastern areas and the numbers are showing far more  
77 success than print ads. Sarah Imes: Motor Coach tours have been a key element in the current focus on  
78 expanding mid-week traffic. A September Ithaca culinary tour is expected to book 60 room nights and will  
79 be the third tour this year.

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81 Jodi LaPierre noted the two-day closing of the Visitors Centers which allowed staff to attend a retreat which  
82 focused on new ideas. CAP has asked the CVB to take over the Ithacaevents.com website to take  
83 advantage of economies of scale with the visitithaca.com overhaul, and they are planning to pursue this.  
84 Focuses on branding are in the works with some possible font and size changes.

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86 Mary Rachun shared recent analysis showing that the Tompkins County lodging industry experienced  
87 significant growth between 2000 and 2013 with an increase in room supply of 42% and an increase in room  
88 rates of 65%, compared to a national increase in rates of 39%. Estimated revenues increased from \$23.5  
89 million in 2000 to \$49.5 million in 2013, an increase of 110%. Occupancy has only slightly declined. An  
90 estimated additional 16,000 room nights sold a year, or 300 mid-week rooms per week, will take away a  
91 widening gap between room supply and room sales. This would move occupancy from 59% up to 62%.  
92 Some suggestions for increasing mid-week stays were motor coach tours, meetings and conferences.

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94 **STPB Budget Committee** – Rick Adie asked members to provide input on the direction of the 2015  
95 budget. The STPB Budget Committee met with administrators to discuss trends in the lodging industry as  
96 well as programmatic trends and opportunities. New hotel construction is still on the horizon. A new 70  
97 room hotel may be constructed on Elmira Road possibly in late fall of 2015. Hotel Ithaca will feature 60 new  
98 rooms and will include a convention/meeting center. The Marriot at the east end of the Commons has a 16  
99 month construction schedule and is expected to break ground this year. The Ithaca Commons projected  
100 completion date is November of 2014. PKF provided projections for Tompkins County which were for 7.7%  
101 revenue growth in 2014 and 7.1% growth in 2015. So the industry is expected to remain healthy but the  
102 County has a \$60,000 obligation to TCAD in 2015 out of room tax and \$30K is needed to replenish room  
103 tax reserves back to 3% of revenues. So this expected growth in room tax not expected to be available to  
104 tourism programs.

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106 Members were asked to provide guidance to the budget committee about the importance of setting funds  
107 aside in 2015 for strategic tourism implementation. Discussion included mention of the importance of  
108 implementing the new Wayfinding Strategy and the possibility of redoing the Chmura study. The budget  
109 committee will work up guidance for program administrators.

110  
111 **Ag & Culinary Tourism Taskforce Report** – Rita Rosenberg: A wide variety of community members  
112 related to Ag & Culinary had their first meeting to begin developing an implementation plan for ag & culinary  
113 tourism. The meeting explored strengths, opportunities, and challenges in the local ag and culinary tourism  
114 field. Ethan Ash: the task force is in the process of developing a 5 year plan by the end of 2014. To be  
115 included with the report will be a stakeholders list and list of local assets.

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117 **Announcement**

118 Upcoming tourism grant-funded events were highlighted and members were encouraged to attend. Tom and  
119 Mike Mellor developed an online feedback form. Please use it to share information with other STPB  
120 members about your experience. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/STPBeventfeedback>

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122 With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:45pm

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124 Respectfully Submitted,  
125 Jennifer Turner, Administrative Assistant  
126 Tompkins County Planning Department

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128 **Next Meeting Scheduled**  
129 Wednesday, May 21, 2014 at the State Theatre of Ithaca

## **CVB Report May 2014**

### **CVB 2015 Budget Forecast**

In its guidance for 2015 budgeting, the County requested room-tax funded organizations to decrease budget requests by 3.5 percent from 2014. The CVB plans to comply with this request and expects minimal impact to programming. Cost savings will come from the smaller travel guide (introduced earlier this year) and the previously planned elimination of Winter Recess. One note: Admin costs will rise with inflation so the share of budget devoted to administration will rise as a percent of overall budget.

### **Sales: Group Tours**

Last month, the CVB Sales staff reported that it had already booked three motorcoach tours in 2014 representing roughly \$60,000 in economic activity. We're happy to report that our increased outreach to the tour market continues to pay off; we now have seven tours in the works worth more than \$100,000 in economic activity. Booking pace is well ahead of 2013.

### **Sales: Chinese Market**

Groups from mainland China represent a major market opportunity. These groups routinely travel from NYC to Niagara Falls and require a midway stopover. Corning has been very successful attracting these visitors. We're taking a major step with this market next week. Sales Director Mary Rachun will attend the NAJ Conference in NYC which is the major marketplace for operators catering to Chinese tourists. We're pursuing key operators with a distinctive sales tool: a hardcover book in Mandarin and English telling the story of Ithaca. The goal is to turn an unknown place into a must-see stop between NYC and Niagara. (Sample provide)

### **Sales: Meetings & Conventions**

We continue to pursue meeting sales, but as discussed previously, we're fielding objections based on price and facilities. The most recent example is the 2015 Wine Bloggers Conference (200 attendees, three night, June 2015). This piece of business has been in development several years and ran into cost/facilities problems going to contract at the end of April. While signed contracts have been difficult to come by, our lead generation/referral pace is ahead of last year.

### **Visitor Services Downtown Open House**

Thanks to all the board members who attended the visitor services open house at the Downtown Visitor Center, May 6. The space is jointly operated by CVB, DIA and CAP making it cost effective way to support the missions of all three organizations. We used the occasion as a local PR opportunity with the unveiling of a large mural by local artist Dan Burgevin. Sample media: <http://www.lansingstar.com/around-town/10677-giant-ithaca-mural-unveiling-marks-relaunch-of-downtown-visitor-center>

### **Marketing Midweek Overnights**

The CVB is launching a major digital marketing campaign this month designed to boost midweek overnights. Responding to STPB's request for transparency, the campaign is 100% trackable and is designed to yield clear measures of ROI. With an investment of approximately \$100,000, It is the largest single advertising campaign ever launched by the CVB. We will present the campaign in detail next month.

### **PR**

Ithaca and the Finger Lakes were featured in a major article in Hemispheres Magazine in April. Hemispheres is the inflight publication of United Airlines. Credit our regional PR campaign administered through Finger Lakes Regional Tourism Council.

<http://www.hemispheresmagazine.com/2014/04/01/three-perfect-days-finger-lakes/>

Ithaca was the focus of a glowing article in the Toronto Star by travel editor Jim Byers. Byers was a guest of the CVB, we arranged his itinerary with the help of Argos Inn.

[http://www.thestar.com/life/travel\\_blog/2014/05/lovely\\_finger\\_lakes\\_of\\_new\\_york\\_and\\_cool\\_town\\_of\\_ithaca.html](http://www.thestar.com/life/travel_blog/2014/05/lovely_finger_lakes_of_new_york_and_cool_town_of_ithaca.html)