

Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB) Final Meeting Minutes

1 **Date:** Aug. 20, 2025
2 **Time:** 3:00-3:30pm
3 **Location:** Via Zoom

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5 **Attendees:**

Member		Representation	Member		Representation
Amanda Bisson	E	TC3	Teri Tarshus	E	Lodging
Brett Bossard	P	At-Large	Marian Levy Ware	P	At-Large
Laura Winter Falk	P	Agriculinary	Vacant		At-Large
Jeff Golden	E	Ithaca College	<i>Megan Barber</i>	P	<i>CAP, Non-voting</i>
Alexis Zaharis Grimm	P	Lodging	<i>Peggy Coleman</i>	P	<i>Chamber, Non-voting</i>
Ken Jupiter	P	At-Large	<i>Frank Doldo</i>	E	<i>Transportation, Non-voting</i>
Doug Levine	E	At-Large	<i>Suzanne Smith Jablonski</i>	P	<i>IDCC, Non-voting</i>
Kelly Makosch	P	Recreation	<i>Kurt Anderson</i>	P	<i>IAED, Non-voting</i>
Rick Manning	P	Recreation	<i>Nan Rohrer</i>	P	<i>DIA, Non-voting</i>
Greg Mezey	A	At-Large	<i>Mike Sigler</i>	A	<i>TC Legislature, Non-voting</i>
Bethany Parisi	E	Arts-Culture	<i>Vacant</i>		<i>CVB, Non-voting</i>
Barbara Romano	P	Cornell University	<i>Michael Miller</i>	P	<i>Associate Member</i>
Monika Roth	P	Agriculinary	Nick Helmholt	P	Tourism Program Director
Jason Sidle	P	At-Large	Kristin McCarthy	P	County Staff
Steven Stull	P	Arts-Culture			

6 **Guests:** Lonnie Jenkins, Suzanne Smith Jablonski

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8 **Opening Remarks/Changes to the Agenda/Privilege of the Floor** – Vice Chair Kelly Makosch called the
9 meeting to order at 3:00pm.

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11 **Action: Approval of June and July 2025 STPB Draft Minutes** – The June and July draft meeting minutes
12 were approved as submitted.

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14 **Report/Action: Vote to Recommend Tourism Promotion Agency Designation** – *Peggy Coleman*
15 Peggy presented a resolution requesting that the Tompkins County Legislature approve the Ithaca
16 Tompkins County Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) as the official Tourism Promotion Agency for
17 Tompkins County for 2026. She explained that the NYS Tourism Promotion Act requires the legislature of
18 each county to appoint such an agency as the applicant and recipient of state tourism matching funds.

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20 **Action:** Monika Roth made a motion, which Ken Jupiter seconded, to recommend Tompkins County
21 Legislature approve the designation of the Ithaca Tompkins County Convention and Visitors Bureau as the
22 2026 Tourism Promotion Agency for Tompkins County. Motion carried.

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24 **Report/Action: Membership and Bylaws Committee** – *Ken Jupiter*

25 On behalf of the committee, Ken recommended Sarah Barden for the vacant at-large seat on the Strategic
26 Tourism Planning Board, citing her diverse experience including work at the CVB and running a food
27 tourism business. Additionally, Peggy enthusiastically endorsed Barden as "a rock star," praising her
28 strategic thinking and commitment to ensuring tourism benefits reach the entire county.

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30 **Action:** Laura Winter Falk moved to recommend Sarah Barden for appointment as at-large representative
31 to the Strategic Tourism Planning Board. Barbara Romano seconded the motion. Motion carried.

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Planning & Evaluation Committee: Hotel Room Occupancy Tax Law – Ken Jupiter

Ken led a discussion on updates to the hotel room occupancy tax law on behalf of the P&E Committee, explaining that the legislation is necessary to continue collecting room tax from short term rental units. Steven Stull confirmed that the changes primarily involve cleaning up language and ensuring legal compliance with the process. According to Peggy and Nick Helmholtz, the updates aim to align with new New York State short-term rental regulations that took effect in February. Nick noted that the current tax law doesn't specifically address short-term rentals, so updates are needed to confirm compliance with state law. The changes will require a public hearing, tentatively scheduled for Sept. 2. Nick added that additional housekeeping issues flagged by the County Attorney's office and Finance Department are also being addressed.

Action: Vote to Recommend Modifications to Existing Local Hotel Room Occupancy Tax Law

Brett Bossard made a motion, seconded by Steven Stull, to recommend modifications to Tompkins County's existing local hotel room occupancy tax law for review and approval by the Tompkins County Legislature. Motion carried.

Staff Report – Nick Helmholtz

Nick updated the group on County Administration's allocation of \$500,000 in room tax revenue to support the Ithaca Airport in the proposed 2026 Tompkins County budget. The discussion covered the typical budget timeline, with the County Administrator delivering the budget around Labor Day, followed by legislative debate through September and voting in October. Board members will have multiple opportunities to provide input on the proposal. Discussion covered multiple topics including clarification needed on airport operations and fund utilization, as no specific details were available on how the funds would be used. It was confirmed that no airport funding had been allocated in the STPB's 2026 budget. Plans were discussed to engage with airport and County officials regarding the SCASD grant to potentially reduce or eliminate the room tax funding request. The discussion covered concerns about whether this would become an annual request and potential precedent-setting for using room tax funds for general infrastructure. The need to understand specific airport expenses and tourist usage of the airport was emphasized. Offers were made to help develop communication strategies regarding the importance of room tax funds, and requests were made for additional data on tourist usage to inform funding level decisions. Nick will keep the board updated on the budget process and share information when the full budget is released.

Adjournment – Vice Chair Kelly Makosch adjourned the meeting at 4:16pm.