

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

1 **Date:** Feb. 18, 2026
 2 **Time:** 3:00-4:30pm
 3 **Location:** Old Jail/Via Zoom

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5 **Attendees:**

Member		Representation	Member		Representation
Sarah Barden	P	At-Large	Steve Selin	P	At-Large
Amanda Bisson	P	TC3	Teri Tarshus	E	Lodging
Laura Winter Falk	P	Agriculinary	Marian Levy Ware	P	At-Large
Jeff Golden	E	Ithaca College	Vacant		Recreation
Alexis Zaharis Grimm	P	Lodging	<i>Kurt Foreman</i>	P	<i>IAED, Non-voting</i>
Ken Jupiter	P	At-Large	<i>Megan Barber</i>	P	<i>CAP, Non-voting</i>
Michelle Kortenaar	E	At-Large	<i>Peggy Coleman</i>	P	<i>CVB, Non-voting</i>
Doug Levine	E	At-Large	<i>Frank Doldo</i>	P	<i>Transportation, Non-voting</i>
Kelly Makosch	P	Recreation	<i>Suzanne Smith Jablonski</i>	P	<i>IDCC, Non-voting</i>
Michael Miller	P	At-Large	<i>Rob Montana</i>	A	<i>Chamber, Non-voting</i>
Megan Omohundro	P	At-Large	<i>Nan Rohrer</i>	A	<i>DIA, Non-voting</i>
Bethany Parisi	P	Arts-Culture	<i>Greg Mezey</i>	A	<i>TC Legislature, Non-voting</i>
Barbara Romano	P	Cornell University	Nick Helmholdt	P	Tourism Program Director
Monika Roth	P	Agriculinary	Kristin McCarthy	P	County Staff

6 **Guests:** Mike Horan, Christina Joyce, Roxan Noble, Katie Phelps, Erin Rafalowski, Chris Stephany, Alex
 7 Thornton

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9 **Opening Remarks/Changes to the Agenda/Privilege of the Floor** – Vice Chair Kelly Makosch called the
 10 meeting to order at approximately 3:04pm. There were no changes to the agenda or privilege of the floor
 11 requests. Several guests introduced themselves.

12 **Action: Approval of January 2026 STPB Draft Minutes** – The January meeting minutes were approved
 13 (motion by Michael Miller, second by Marian Levy Ware) as submitted. Motion carried.

14 **Vice Chair’s Report** – *Kelly Makosch*
 15 None

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 17 **Staff Report** – *Nick Helmholdt*

18 Nick highlighted several items from the February staff report, including a reminder to complete conflict of
 19 interest forms and a call for candidates to fill a vacant recreation seat. The Visitor Profile Study data portal
 20 is shutting down next month, and a recent grant information session drew about a dozen first-time
 21 applicants, with awards to be presented at the March 18 STPB meeting. The 2025 books are closed, and the
 22 Tourism Program enters 2026 with a reserve balance near its target of just over \$1 million, with a budget
 23 adjustment for unspent funds heading to the Housing and Economic Development Committee on March 4.

24 **Air Services Board/Ithaca Tompkins County Int’l Airport** – *Mike Horan, Roxan Noble, Chris Stephany*
 25 Mike, Roxan, and Chris presented to the STPB seeking an 8% occupancy tax allocation to support the
 26 airport’s operating budget. They reported that the airport contributes approximately \$41 million in annual
 27 economic output, produces \$3.6 million in state and local tax revenue, and employs around 155 people. A
 28 central challenge is the airport's cost per enplanement (CPE) of approximately \$28, well above the industry
 29 target of \$15 and higher than comparable regional airports. The airport has pursued cost reductions
 30 including in-house management of parking, cleaning, and landscaping; closure of the customs facility; and

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31 renegotiated lease terms with Taughannock Aviation. The requested 8% allocation, modeled after the
32 existing conference center funding structure, would fluctuate with room tax collections rather than
33 represent a fixed amount, and is one of several funding sources being pursued — with STPB identified as
34 the first community partner approached. Board discussion raised questions about the distinction between
35 tourist and institutional travel, whether CPE reductions translate to lower consumer ticket prices, and the
36 conference center's potential to attract larger events if air service improved.

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38 **Action: Recommend a funding arrangement to support ITH airport**

39 The board agreed to table the vote and revisit the resolution at the first Budget Committee meeting, citing
40 the resolution's lack of specificity around measurable outcomes, deliverables, and duration of
41 commitment. Members asked to submit questions and feedback in advance of the committee meeting so
42 they could be compiled and addressed prior to further deliberation.

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44 **Member Announcements** – Members shared several items of interest, including a reminder that
45 registration for the upcoming Tompkins Chamber 2026 Economic Summit is still open. New STPB member
46 Kurt Foreman, in his sixth week at Ithaca Area Economic Development, introduced himself and expressed
47 enthusiasm for engaging with the board and community. Sarah noted that K-House Karaoke & Arts Hub
48 just opened in the former Watershed building.

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50 **Adjournment** – Vice Chair Kelly Makosch adjourned the meeting at 4:12pm.