

Tompkins County Strategic Tourism Planning Board

Wednesday, April 21, 2021; 3:00pm – 5:00pm

Zoom Meeting ID: 940 8440 0162 – Password: 782239

AGENDA	Start
1. STPB Meeting Minutes	3:00
• ACTION – Approve March Meeting Minutes	
2. Privilege of the Floor	
• Limit of 3 minutes per person for members of the public to address the board	
3. Chair’s Report – Kelli Cartmill	3:05
4. Staff Report & Q1 2021 Room Tax Report – Nick Helmholdt	3:10
5. Presentation: DIA Ambassadors Program Annual Report – Olivia Pastella	3:20
6. Tourism Recovery Committee Update – Kelli Cartmill	3:40
7. Conference Center Update – Gary Ferguson	3:50
8. Planning & Evaluation Committee Updates – Josh Friedman	4:00
9. Member Announcements	4:20
10. Adjournment	

Agenda Packet

1. March draft STPB meeting minutes
2. Q1 Room Tax Report
3. Memo: Tourism Considerations of Cannabis Legalization in New York State
4. Diversity Equity & Inclusion Planning Committee Charge



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.

Meeting Access Notes

- Prior to joining the meeting, please ensure your Zoom profile has your correct name: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201363203-Customizing-your-Profile>
- Dial 646-558-8656 to join the meeting by telephone.

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

1 **Date:** March 17, 2021
 2 **Time:** 3:00-5:00pm
 3 **Location:** Virtual Meeting – Zoom Video Conference

4
 5 **Attendees:**
 6

Member		Representation	Member		Representation
Brett Bossard	P	Arts-Culture	<i>Megan Barber</i>	E	<i>CAP, Non-Voting</i>
Kelli Cartmill	P	Lodging	<i>Peggy Coleman</i>	P	<i>Chamber, Non-Voting</i>
Laura Winter Falk	P	At-Large	<i>Gary Ferguson</i>	P	<i>DIA, Non-Voting</i>
Josh Friedman	P	Arts-Culture	<i>Henry Granison</i>	P	<i>TC Legislature, Non-Voting</i>
Connie Kan	P	At-Large	<i>Heather McDaniel</i>	A	<i>IEAD, Non-Voting</i>
Arthur Keith	P	Lodging	<i>Jennifer Tavares</i>	P	<i>Chamber, Non-Voting</i>
Wendy Kobler	P	Ithaca College	<i>Vacant</i>	N/A	<i>Transportation, Non-Voting</i>
Doug Levine	P	Arts-Culture	<i>Jim Brophy</i>	P	<i>Associate Member</i>
Kelly Makosch	P	Recreation	<i>Erica Frenay</i>	A	<i>Associate Member</i>
Rick Manning	P	At-Large	<i>Ken Jupiter</i>	P	<i>Associate Member</i>
Erin Marteau	P	At-Large	<i>Carol Kammen</i>	A	<i>Associate Member</i>
Greg Mezey	P	At-Large	<i>Michael Miller</i>	P	<i>Associate Member</i>
Todd Parlato	P	At-Large	<i>Jon Reis</i>	P	<i>Associate Member</i>
Barbara Romano	P	Cornell University	<i>Wylie Schwartz</i>	P	<i>Associate Member</i>
Monika Roth	P	Agriculture	Nick Helmholdt	P	Tourism Program Director
Deb Mohlenhoff	E	TC3	Kristin McCarthy	P	TCDPS
Steven Stull	P	Arts-Culture			
Scott Wiggins	A	At-Large			

7 **Guests:** Kurt Anderson, Maia Consolo, Mila Fournier, Sarah Imes, Jodi LaPierre

8 **Opening Remarks/Changes to the Agenda** – Chair Kelli Cartmill welcomed everyone to the meeting. No
 9 changes to the agenda.

10 **Action: Approval of February 2021 STPB Meeting Minutes** – Steven Stull made a motion, which Kelly
 11 Makosch seconded, to approve the draft February minutes. Motion carried by members present.

12 **Privilege of the Floor** – No members of the public spoke.

13

14 **Chair Report – Kelli Cartmill**

15 Kelli reported on last Town of Ithaca meeting regarding short term rental (STR) policies. She and Nick are
 16 drafting letter in support of STRs as long as they pay taxes and register with County. Letter would not
 17 support restrictions on duration of stay.

18

19 **Staff Report – Nick Helmholdt**

20 Nick briefed group on several developments:

- 21 • Beginning April 1, New York State will no longer require quarantine for domestic travel.
- 22 • The 5% hotel room occupancy tax rate took effect March 1 and is being applied across the board.
 23 Results will show up in reporting for second quarter (July).
- 24 • A resolution to approve vendor for a County STR compliance system is headed to Housing and
 25 Economic Development committee next week.
- 26 • County administration and staff are taking deep dive look at federal \$1.9 trillion American Rescue
 27 Plan (ARP) to assess how rules and other components break down at county-level.

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29 Discussion touched on related topics, such as proposal in governor's budget to add sales tax to Airbnb,
30 marijuana legalization, and threats by some Republican state attorneys general to sue over state and local
31 aid provisions in ARP.

32

Tourism Recovery Committee Update – Kelli Cartmill

34 Committee has met a few times. Focus is on developing campaign to drive up tourism and visitor spending
35 in near term, not just in regards to lodging but also dining and shopping. Committee is testing messaging
36 with Peggy and her team at CVB, and contract is in the works with Sojern digital marketing to execute a
37 social media campaign. Q&A discussion also touched on visitation to area state parks and efforts to better
38 inform and assist the public on issues like park closures through tools such as electronic road signs (in
39 collaboration with County Highway Department) and the Parks Explorer app.

40

Presentation: DIA Festivals Program Annual Report – Scott Rougeau

42 Scott from Downtown Ithaca Alliance presented the 2019 annual report for the Festivals program. His
43 presentation touched on the history of the program, its guiding principles, and types of services offered.
44 These include technical assistance in the form of proof of concept review for events, help networking with
45 vendors, investigating potential venues and permitting issues, marketing and public outreach expertise, and
46 metrics reporting for grant requirements. In addition, the program offers a free equipment rental program
47 and hosts event planning workshops focused on topics such as funding, venue scouting, trash/recycling,
48 volunteer recruitment, youth engagement, and public safety. Sixty-eight events borrowed equipment in
49 2019, resulting in a savings of \$28,000 for event planners. A few of the events assisted by the Festivals
50 program are Cayuga Sound, FLX Thaw, Gorges Classic soccer tournament, First Peoples Festival, Ithaca
51 Festival, Juneteenth, FLX Comedy Festival, and Aids Ride for Life. Q&A discussion touched on public safety
52 concerns, including expenses tied to event security, constraints on municipal budgets, rapid COVID-19
53 testing for events, pending release of NYS Excelsior Pass, a DIA Festivals "wish list" (additional storage,
54 crowd control barriers), rebuilding public confidence about attending large events post-COVID, and
55 geographic spread within County for requests for services.

56

Presentation: Finger Lakes National Heritage Area – Cindy Kimble, FLX Tourism Alliance

58 Cindy Kimble from the Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance gave a presentation on the campaign to secure
59 National Heritage Area (NHA) designation for the Finger Lakes region. Her talk provided background
60 context, including history of the Finger Lakes as New York State's only legally designated tourism region,
61 themes for public comment (e.g. agricultural traditions, social ideas translated to national movements),
62 and a timeline of key events. The National Park Service is conducting a feasibility study
63 (<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/fingerlakes>), for which the public comment period closes June 1. Ways to
64 help include submitting public comments and issuing letters and resolutions of support. Cindy has
65 templates to share and needs all materials by May 15. After June 1, the National Park Service will compile
66 public comments and issue its recommendations. Bill will then go to Capitol Hill for a vote, where pending
67 passage by U.S. House of Representatives and Senate it would next travel to the White House to be signed
68 into law. Q&A discussion touched on various topics, including whether any economic impact studies have
69 been conducted following NHA designation, regranteeing process, budget protocols, and whether there is
70 any issue with belonging to two overlapping NHAs (e.g. Finger Lakes and Erie Canal).

71

72 **Action:** Monika Roth, seconded by Erin Marteau, moved to approve that a letter in support of National
73 Heritage Area designation for the Finger Lakes region be prepared and submitted to the National Parks
74 Service by the Strategic Tourism Planning Board, and to approve the board's support for a County-

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75 sponsored resolution endorsing National Heritage Area designation for the Finger Lakes. Motion carried by
76 members present.

77

78 **Member Announcements** – Members shared items of interest, including updates on commencement
79 weekend plans for Cornell and Ithaca College, formation of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion subcommittee
80 (anyone interested in joining should reach out to Josh or Nick via email), plans to reopen Statler Hotel this
81 summer, board member recruitment for T-burg Chamber of Commerce, private movie party rentals at
82 Cinemapolis and plans to develop package deals with local lodging operators, deadline (April 16) for Erie
83 Canalway National Heritage Corridor events and festivals grant funding, and details on several virtual
84 events. These included First Fridays gallery nights, Ithaca Native Landscape Symposium, an upcoming
85 Experience! The Finger Lakes presentation with Greg Lambrecht, creator of the Coravin wine preservation
86 system, and The Cherry Arts’ Masters of Movement dance performance series, for which Triphammer Arts
87 is serving as fiscal sponsor.

88

89 Lastly, but most importantly, everyone wished Brett a very Happy Birthday!

90

91 Chair Kelli Cartmill adjourned the meeting at 4:30 pm.

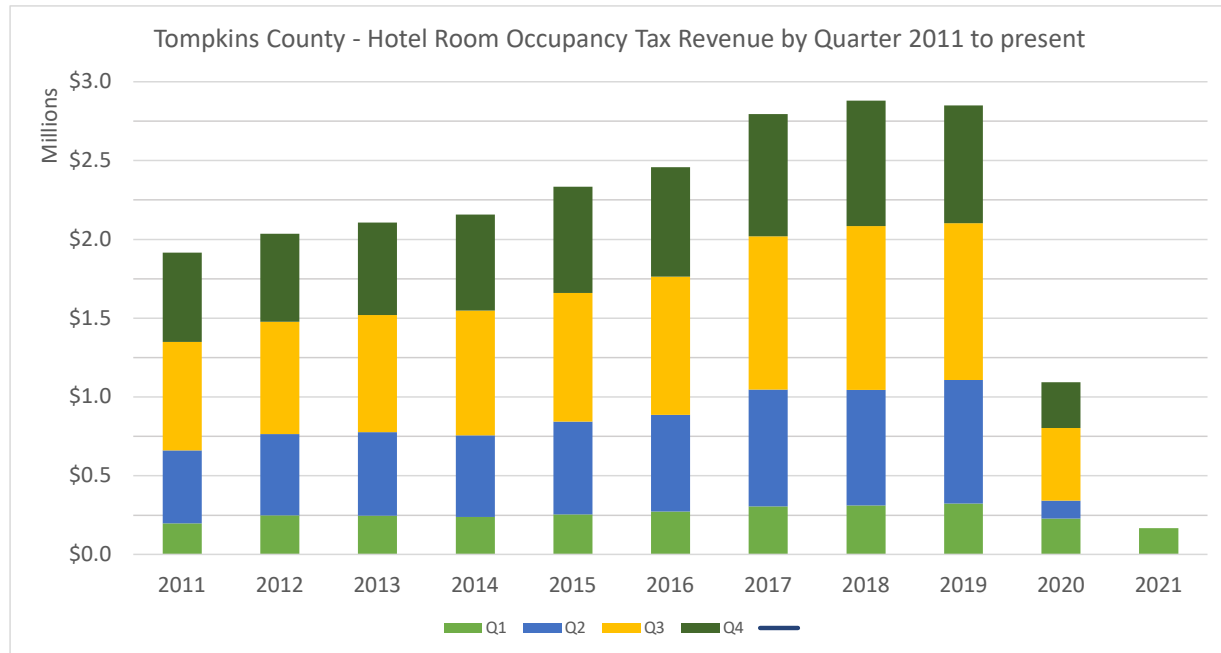
Tompkins County - Hotel Room Occupancy Tax Revenue - 2011 to present

Totals by quarter & year

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Q1	198,559	249,508	246,795	239,394	255,511	272,677	306,561	311,725	324,584	228,485	167,311
Q2	462,564	515,379	530,995	518,257	588,301	613,413	739,499	732,497	782,432	113,248	
Q3	688,976	712,305	742,300	791,531	816,604	876,679	973,901	1,039,520	995,164	462,321	
Q4	566,231	558,170	586,547	607,263	673,415	696,084	774,477	796,894	746,565	289,417	
Add'l Rev.*	5,102	45,069	42,079	107,084	34,425	19,043	18,806	43,945	89,617	145,794	84,051
Total	1,921,431	2,080,430	2,148,716	2,263,529	2,368,257	2,477,896	2,813,243	2,924,581	2,938,361	1,239,264	251,362
Budgeted	1,859,659	2,036,716	2,152,700	2,260,335	2,373,352	2,495,315	2,635,870	2,754,484	2,935,000	1,852,150	1,906,955
Actual - Budgeted	61,772	43,714	(3,984)	3,194	(5,095)	(17,419)	177,373	170,097	3,361	(612,886)	(1,655,593)
Room Tax Change	7.7%	8.3%	3.3%	5.3%	4.6%	4.6%	13.5%	4.0%	0.5%	-57.8%	

Tax Status as of March 21, 2021

Total Registered Lodging Establishments	82
Registered Hotels & Motels	28
Registered Bed & Breakfast Inns	105
Delinquent Hotels & Motels	6
Delinquent Bed & Breakfast Inns	15



Tompkins County - Hotel Room Occupancy Tax Revenue - 2011 to present

Quarter over Quarter Change (i.e. Q2 2017 vs Q2 2016)

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Q1	-3.4%	25.7%	-1.1%	-3.0%	6.7%	6.7%	12.4%	1.7%	4.1%	-29.6%	-26.8%
Q2	2.8%	11.4%	3.0%	-2.4%	13.5%	4.3%	20.6%	-0.9%	6.8%	-85.5%	
Q3	7.2%	3.4%	4.2%	6.6%	3.2%	7.4%	11.1%	6.7%	-4.3%	-53.5%	
Q4	14.7%	-1.4%	5.1%	3.5%	10.9%	3.4%	11.3%	2.9%	-6.3%	-61.2%	

Quarterly Tax Revenues as a Share of Annual Tax Revenue

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Q1	10.3%	12.0%	11.5%	10.6%	10.8%	11.0%	10.9%	10.7%	11.0%	18.4%	
Q2	24.1%	24.8%	24.7%	22.9%	24.8%	24.8%	26.3%	25.0%	26.6%	9.1%	
Q3	35.9%	34.2%	34.5%	35.0%	34.5%	35.4%	34.6%	35.5%	33.9%	37.3%	
Q4	29.5%	26.8%	27.3%	26.8%	28.4%	28.1%	27.5%	27.2%	25.4%	23.4%	

Tax Paid by Establishments with 10 Rooms or Fewer (aka 3% tax on B&Bs)

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Q1	9,425	9,110	10,844	12,983	16,591	17,824	39,904	44,754	56,081	62,037	62,919
Q2	18,504	17,983	19,950	23,174	27,841	33,410	78,444	89,909	115,691	2,954	
Q3	31,872	32,989	40,366	44,363	58,906	85,806	96,937	113,307	116,544	108,058	
Q4	21,359	22,468	22,632	28,282	35,956	51,483	57,450	64,920	69,467	71,268	
Total	81,160	82,551	93,792	108,802	139,294	188,524	272,735	312,890	357,782	244,318	62,919
Year over Year Change	4.3%	1.7%	13.6%	16.0%	28.0%	35.3%	44.7%	14.7%	14.3%		

Tax Paid by Establishments with 11 Rooms or More (aka 5% tax on Hotels & Motels)

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Q1	189,136	240,397	235,951	226,431	238,922	254,852	266,657	266,971	268,503	166,449	104,392
Q2	444,058	497,394	511,048	495,084	560,460	580,003	661,055	642,589	666,741	110,293	
Q3	657,104	679,314	701,932	747,151	757,697	791,252	876,964	926,213	878,621	381,897	
Q4	544,871	535,704	563,917	578,873	637,460	645,011	717,027	731,975	677,098	218,149	
Total	1,835,169	1,952,809	2,012,848	2,047,539	2,194,538	2,271,118	2,521,702	2,567,747	2,490,962	876,788	104,392
Year over Year Change	7.1%	6.4%	3.1%	1.7%	7.2%	3.5%	11.0%	1.8%	-3.0%		

Share of Exempt Sales (Exempt Sales / Gross Sales)

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Q1	21.2%	22.1%	21.9%	24.1%	22.5%	22.5%	19.2%	20.2%	21.4%	19.5%	50.1%
Q2	15.0%	14.3%	15.4%	13.9%	13.0%	14.4%	12.6%	14.4%	13.5%	31.4%	
Q3	10.5%	10.5%	10.8%	10.8%	10.0%	10.5%	6.7%	11.8%	12.3%	15.8%	
Q4	11.7%	13.3%	14.3%	12.8%	12.3%	12.6%	13.7%	14.5%	16.0%	23.4%	
Total	13.2%	13.8%	14.3%	13.8%	13.0%	13.5%	11.7%	14.2%	14.7%	20.3%	
Year over Year Change	-2.1%	4.7%	4.0%	-4.1%	-5.9%	4.5%	-13.2%	20.8%	3.9%	37.5%	

Historic Tax Rates for Hotels & Motels

3% - until May 1, 2002
 4% - until December 1, 2002
 4 ½ % - until June 1, 2003
 5% - June 1, 2003 and beyond

Quarter Periods

Q1: Dec Jan Feb
 Q2: Mar Apr May
 Q3: Jun Jul Aug
 Q4: Sep Oct Nov

Taxes Due

Mar 20
 Jun 20
 Sep 20
 Dec 20

Reported to STPB

Apr
 Jul
 Oct
 Jan

Footnotes

*Additional Revenue = Tax collected outside of current quarter.
 Voluntary Collection Agreement w/ Airbnb - effective July 1, 2016
 More Details on Hotel Room Occupancy Taxes are available online:
<http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/finance/roomtax>

TO: Strategic Tourism Planning Board
FROM: Nick Helmholtz, Principal Planner / Tourism Program Director
CC: Katherine Borgella, Commissioner of Planning & Sustainability
DATE: April 14, 2021
RE: Tourism Considerations of Cannabis Legalization in New York State

BACKGROUND

On March 31, 2021, Governor Cuomo signed into law the New York State Cannabis/Marijuana Regulation & Taxation Act¹² (MRTA, S.854-A/A.1248-A). With this law New York became the 16th state to legalize recreational (aka adult-use) marijuana. The MRTA contains provisions that could have long-term implications for tourism in Tompkins County to consider.

The Strategic Tourism Plan completed last year identified cannabis legalization as a strategic opportunity (page 20). The intent of this memo is to outline the relevant provisions of the law for the STPB to consider.

MUNICIPAL CONTROLS ON RETAIL DISPENSARIES AND ON-SITE CONSUMPTION

Cities, towns, and villages cannot opt-out of adult-use legalization. However, municipalities can opt-out of allowing licenses for adult-use cannabis retail dispensaries or on-site consumption establishments by passing a local law before December 31, 2021. (Opt-out laws are subject to referendum, meaning they could be repealed by voters.)

At this point it is not clear which, if any, of the county's 16 municipalities will decide to opt-out of allowing dispensary licenses or on-site consumption licenses. Counties are not allowed to opt-out. Considering Mayor Svante Myrick's vocal support of this legislation³, it appears likely that the City of Ithaca will not opt-out.

Retail dispensaries and on-site consumption establishments are prohibited within 500 feet of school grounds and 200 feet from houses of worship. The law prohibits entities from holding both types of licenses simultaneously. In addition, the law allows municipalities to further restrict the "time, place and manner" of these facilities. This means that municipalities could restrict the operating hours, signage, and other aspects of these establishments.

Municipalities that allow licenses for retail dispensaries or on-site consumption will be notified in advance of applications for these licenses and will be allowed to comment regarding license applications. Municipalities with these facilities will collect a portion of the tax revenue collected. (Specifically, a 4% excise tax will be imposed on cannabis sales. One-quarter of this revenue will be

¹ Text of MRTA, https://assembly.state.ny.us/leg/?default_fld=&leg_video=&bn=A01248&term=&Text=Y

² Press Release from Governor's Office, <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-signs-legislation-legalizing-adult-use-cannabis>

³ Ithaca Voice, "Weed legalized in NY, but local retail options may still have to wait until 2022," <https://ithacavoices.com/2021/04/weed-legalized-in-ny-but-local-retail-options-may-still-have-to-wait-until-2022/>

allocated to the county and three-quarters will be allocated to the respective city, town, or village where the sale took place.)

It is possible that the STPB will be approached by municipal officials weighing these local considerations in the coming months and years.

CANNABIS POSSESSION AND PUBLIC CONSUMPTION

The law allows for the possession of up to three ounces of cannabis and 24 grams of cannabis concentrate outside of the home. Cannabis possession remains illegal for individuals under 21 years of age. Transporting cannabis out of state also remains illegal.

The law adds cannabis to the Clean Indoor Air Act⁴ (CIAA). Smoking and vaping cannabis will be banned in places where cigarette smoking is currently banned under the CIAA. Municipalities can adopt laws which are more restrictive than the CIAA.

Cannabis use while driving is still prohibited. The law does direct some funding to additional drug recognition training for law enforcement.

Consistent and accurate communication regarding cannabis possession and consumption will be important for any establishment that interacts with visitors.

CANNABIS PRODUCTION AND RESEARCH

The MRTA also establishes a series of licenses to regulate cannabis production. These licenses will be under the authority of a Cannabis Control Board within the Office of Cannabis Management (OCM). In addition to retail dispensaries and on-site consumption, the OCM will award licenses for cannabis:

- nurseries
- cultivation
- processing
- distribution
- cooperatives
- microbusinesses
- delivery
- research

It is not clear what power, if any, municipalities will have to regulate the operations of these establishments beyond their established zoning ordinances.

Entities that hold licenses for retail dispensaries or on-site consumption are prohibited from holding a license to allow cultivation, processing, distribution, microbusiness, or cooperative operations under the new law. Retail dispensaries can deliver cannabis through independently licensed businesses.

It is generally expected that the OCM will take at least one year to set up the regulatory process for these licenses⁵. The law seeks to establish a social and economic equity program to benefit individuals disproportionately impacted by cannabis enforcement. The goal is for 50% of licenses to go to a minority- or woman-owned business enterprise, or distressed farmers or service-disabled veterans, to encourage participation in the industry.

⁴ Guide to Clean Indoor Air Act: <https://www.health.ny.gov/publications/3402/>

⁵ Times Union, "New York's new cannabis laws look a lot like Colorado's", <https://www.timesunion.com/news/article/New-York-s-new-cannabis-laws-look-a-lot-like-16072052.php>

LOCAL TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS

Many have observed that Ithaca and Tompkins County are already perceived as places where cannabis culture runs strong. The Finger Lakes region already has rich agricultural traditions, including the cultivation of grapes and apples, which are both used to create alcoholic beverages. Considering the amount of rural and agricultural land in Tompkins County, some farmers may consider growing cannabis for the adult-use or medical market. In addition, the presence of the state's leading agricultural research institution in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University may bring funding and attention to scientific questions on cannabis. These factors combined can open several long-term opportunities related to cannabis, including:

- guided tours of cannabis growing operations
- integration of cannabis with existing local agricultural offerings
- development of a regional "cannabis trail"
- conferences and meetings focused on cannabis research

The opportunities above should be considered in tandem with other issues surrounding cannabis, which is still illegal under federal law. While the availability of legal marijuana may be important for some visitors, it will be offensive to others. The growth of this market segment will depend on careful communication with visitors and the development of unique and tactful tourism experiences. To address these issues, it may be worthwhile to consider:

- preparing a "frequently answered questions" webpage (or brochure) for front line staff in hospitality, restaurants, and retail
- researching how similar communities in other states have addressed cannabis legalization and communicated with visitors

NEXT STEPS

The STPB should consider if it wants to refine its position on cannabis in light of the recent passage of the MRTA.

The STPB should determine how it would like to engage with the following parties regarding cannabis and tourism:

- Municipalities (towns, village, city)
- Tourism partners (hospitality, restaurants, retail, tour operators, event planners, etc.)
- New and existing businesses considering cannabis production or sales

Strategic Tourism Planning Board

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Planning Committee

April 13, 2021

Committee charges:

- 1) **Assemble a diverse group of community members from the BIPOC community** (including STPB board members and community leaders as possible). Plan a meeting or devise other ways to ascertain feedback on the following topics.
- 2) **Describe the perception of diversity of current visitors to Tompkins County.** Do locals encourage BIPOC friends to come to the area? What do they spend time doing? What feedback has been derived from friends and families' experiences?
- 3) For individual participants and/or for the groups gathered, assess the following areas as they relate to tourism and local quality of life for Tompkins County:
 - a. **(Strengths)** Describe current tourism promotions and products that attract visitors
 - b. **(Weaknesses)** Describe current barriers and perceptions that limit visitation
 - c. **(Opportunities)** Describe future factors that would make Tompkins County a more desirable destination
 - d. **(Threats)** Describe future factors that would make Tompkins County a less desirable destination or place to live.
- 4) **The Committee will evaluate and summarize what they learn, and propose action items which would make Tompkins County and/or the Tourism Program a more diverse and inclusive destination.**

This committee will report its findings to the Planning & Evaluation Committee as tasks are completed.

This committee will be composed of at least two members from the P&E committee and additional advisors from the STPB and community as needed.

*Known potential action items include:

- Provide DEI training for STPB members
- Add module(s) on DEI topics to the Visitor Arrival to Departure (A2D) program