

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

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

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 5 **Attendees:**

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.

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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.

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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 Martea, 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.

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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.

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

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