

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

1 **Date:** April 21, 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>	P	<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>	P	<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>		<i>Transportation, Non-Voting</i>
Doug Levine	P	Arts-Culture	<i>Jim Brophy</i>	A	<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	P	TC3	Kristin McCarthy	P	TCDPS
Steven Stull	P	Arts-Culture			
Scott Wiggins	A	At-Large			

7 **Guests:** Kurt Anderson, Olivia Pastella

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 9 **Opening Remarks/Changes to the Agenda** – Vice Chair Brett Bossard called meeting to order at 3:07pm.  
 10 No changes to the agenda.

11 **Action: Approval of March 2021 STPB Meeting Minutes** – The draft March meeting minutes were  
 12 approved as submitted by the members present. Motion carried.

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

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 15 **Chair Report – Kelli Cartmill**

16 Kelli reported on Budget Committee activities and letter she is drafting on behalf of STPB on proposed  
 17 short term rental regulations under consideration by the Town of Ithaca.

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 19 **Staff Report & Q1 Room Tax Report – Nick Helmholdt**

20 Nick reported on Q1 room tax filings, which totaled roughly \$167,000. In addition, just over \$84,000 in late  
 21 payments for past periods was received. Nick noted that the first quarter figures do not reflect the new 5%  
 22 tax rate for smaller properties. A few lodging operators in the county remain delinquent on hotel tax, and  
 23 Nick is in beginning conversations with County Finance Department in terms of potential consequences,  
 24 one of which includes making such properties ineligible for promotion in CVB marketing materials. Other  
 25 topics covered in his report and subsequent discussion include tax exemption figures, both current and  
 26 pre-COVID, STPB Budget Committee developments, Statler re-opening, occupancy rates and Cornell plans  
 27 for vaccination, and an extensive discussion at recent County Legislature meeting on hotel tax.

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### **Presentation: Downtown Ithaca Alliance Ambassadors Program Report – Olivia Pastella**

Gary Ferguson introduced presenter Olivia Pastella, DIA's newly appointed operations director, and provided some background on the Ambassadors Program, which is composed of a Clean Team and a Hospitality Team. Program got its start in 2002 and was inspired in part by a visit to Niagara-on-the-Lake, which is known for its exceptionally charming downtown landscaping. It ties in decisively with beautification component of Strategic Tourism Plan, enhances offerings for visitors, and involves collaboration with Cornell Cooperative Extension-Tompkins County, TCAT, Downtown Visitors Center, and other partners. Olivia gave an update on the program's activities over the past year. Unfortunately, due to pandemic-related budget constraints, the Hospitality Ambassadors component was cut in 2021, but as visitor numbers increase, there is a cogent argument for bringing them back. Clean Team Ambassadors, however, worked steadily to maintain sanitation and safety during COVID, which saw an uptick in waste from to-go containers and graffiti. They also help field visitor questions as much as possible and are given regular updates by Olivia on current arts and culture events and other tourism-related items of interest.

### **Tourism Recovery Committee**

CVB recently launched the Retreat to Ithaca campaign and is looking for more partners. They'd like to be able to offer more packages to partner with lodging properties. Campaign runs 90 days, focuses on overnight stays, and uses digital marketing to target greater Buffalo area and Northern New Jersey. At end of campaign, CVB will have access to substantial data, which will be useful for strategizing and planning future initiatives. Other topics discussed by committee include ever-evolving state guidance on indoor and outdoor gatherings, myth-busting in terms of visitors and community safety COVID-wise, outdoor signage to promote events, Visitor Journey A2D training, and more.

### **Conference Center Update – Gary Ferguson**

Gary gave a progress report on the Ithaca Downtown Community Conference Center. Steering committee is neck deep in working out bond financing and other issues, with the closing scheduled for the first week of May and demolition slated to begin the second week. Committee is working studiously with management company ASM Global on issues such as retail component, design feedback and operational concerns to address in the construction. The City of Ithaca's hotel room tax went into effect April 1 and will fund this project.

### **Planning & Evaluation Committee Update – Josh Friedman**

Josh reported on developments related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Planning Committee, including scheduling the first meeting in coming weeks. Goals include assembling a diverse group of members to explore ways to make tourism offerings more diverse and inclusive in Tompkins County. Approach will be to take things one step at a time, all the while being mindful of what is in their purview to accomplish. Committee will report back to P&E Committee. Other topics covered in Josh's report included Tourism Program grants and possible restructuring. P&E will be talking about marijuana legalization next month.

**Member Announcements** – Members shared news and events of interest. These included updates from the Agriculinary Tourism Committee, status of County resolution of support for Finger Lakes National Heritage Area designation, Spring Writes literary festival, private movie party rentals at Cinemapolis, Friends of Stewart Park events, Cornell commencement weekend, developments at area wineries, Tompkins Chamber Annual Meeting and Celebration, and more.

Chair Kelli Cartmill adjourned the meeting at 4:41 pm.