

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

1 **Date:** Nov. 15, 2023
 2 **Time:** 3:00-4:30
 3 **Location:** State Theatre

4

5 **Attendees:**

Member		Representation	Member		Representation
Brett Bossard	E	Arts-Culture	Teri Tarshus	P	At-Large
Kelli Cartmill	E	Lodging	Alexis Zaharis Grimm	P	Lodging
Laura Winter Falk	P	At-Large	<i>Megan Barber</i>	P	<i>CAP, Non-Voting</i>
Richard Floyd	P	TC3	Peggy Coleman	P	Chamber, Non-Voting
Josh Friedman	P	Arts-Culture	<i>Nan Rohrer</i>	A	<i>DIA, Non-Voting</i>
Jeff Golden	E	Ithaca College	<i>Mike Sigler</i>	P	<i>TC Legislature, Non-Voting</i>
Ken Jupiter	P	At-Large	<i>Heather McDaniel</i>	E	<i>IAED, Non-Voting</i>
Doug Levine	P	Arts-Culture	<i>Jennifer Tavares</i>	P	<i>Chamber, Non-Voting</i>
Marian Levy Ware	E	At-Large	<i>Patty Poist</i>	E	<i>Transportation, Non-Voting</i>
Kelly Makosch	E	Recreation	<i>Michael Miller</i>	P	<i>Associate Member</i>
Rick Manning	P	At-Large	<i>Jon Reis</i>	E	<i>Associate Member</i>
Greg Mezey	E	At-Large	<i>Wylie Schwartz</i>	A	<i>Associate Member</i>
Barbara Romano	P	Cornell University	<i>Chuck Tauck</i>	E	<i>Associate Member</i>
Monika Roth	P	Agriculture	Nick Helmholdt	P	Tourism Program Director
Steven Stull	P	Arts-Culture	Kristin McCarthy	P	County Staff
Jeremiah Swain	E	At-Large			

6 **Guests:** Holly Mosher, Chris Sponn, Chris Stephany

7

8 **Opening Remarks/Changes to the Agenda/Privilege of the Floor** –Vice chair Doug Levine welcomed
 9 everyone to the meeting at 3:07pm. No privilege of the floor.

10

11 **Action: Approval of October 2023 STPB Draft Minutes** – The draft October 2023 minutes were approved as
 12 submitted (moved by Barbara Romano, seconded by Teri Tarshus).

13

14 **Vice Chair’s Report** – *Doug Levine*

15 Doug welcomed everyone to the State Theatre. He gave a quick update on the lobby expansion and invited
 16 folks to tour the new space after the meeting, reassuring a few concerned members that the upstairs bar
 17 will still be open for business during big shows.

18

19 **Staff Report** – *Nick Helmholdt*

20 Nick provided updates on the Finger Lakes National Heritage Area Act, the City of Ithaca’s Short-Term
 21 Rental Policy, the Strategic Tourism Implementation (STI) grant program, state funding for IthacaTrails.org,
 22 and the Visitor Profile Study. He also shared results from the County Strategic Operations Plan survey,
 23 which identified tourism and visitor attractions as areas where the County excels. The 2023 fourth-quarter
 24 room tax report will be ready in January. In addition, he reviewed the STPB bylaw rules on forming a
 25 nominating committee and asked for volunteers. Monika, Barbara, Steven, and Teri agreed to serve.
 26 Members asked questions regarding the IthacaTrails.org update and nominating committee.

27

28 **Action: Form a 2024 Nominating Committee**

29 Josh Friedman made a motion, with Doug Levine seconding, to appoint Monika Roth, Barbara Romano,

30

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

31 Steven Stull, and Teri Tarshus to the 2023 Nominating Committee for the selection of 2024 STPB officers.
32 Motion carried.

33 **Hotel Room Occupancy Tax Enforcement** – *Holly Mosher, Deputy County Attorney*

34 Holly began her report with a discussion of the recent decrease in delinquent room tax payments, with the
35 number falling from six to one delinquent property in the past couple of months. This decline was
36 attributed to the effectiveness of the current approach, which involves sending letters to delinquent
37 properties. A question was raised about the escalation of fines for late payments. It was clarified that the
38 interest on late payments does escalate, and the longer a property waits to pay, the more it owes. The
39 suggestion was made to explore the possibility of online payment options for room taxes, similar to how
40 sales taxes are paid. Holly said she would look into it with the Finance Department. A discussion ensued
41 about the handling of room tax payments for individual hosts, specifically those who rent out their
42 properties on platforms like Airbnb and VRBO. It was clarified that Airbnb collects and remits room taxes
43 directly for its hosts, while hosts on VRBO and other short-term rental platforms are responsible for paying
44 the taxes themselves. There is concern that some hosts may not be complying with the regulations, and it
45 was suggested that a public awareness campaign could be beneficial. Peggy mentioned that the CVB has
46 been having conversations with short-term rental operators who are not currently listed on their website or
47 in their travel guide. They encourage these operators to register with the County and explain the process
48 for doing so. Additionally, they remove problematic properties from their marketing materials as needed.
49 The discussion concluded with a reminder that anyone with questions about room tax compliance can
50 reach out to the County Attorney's Office.

51

52 **Member Announcements**

53 Members shared news and events of interest. These included performances at Kitchen Theatre, Opera
54 Ithaca, Cayuga Chamber Orchestra, and Lansing Middle School; the Rutabaga Curl at the Farmers Market
55 (on a related note, the market will be coordinating with the History Center on a sports memorabilia
56 exhibit); a delayed Legislature vote on the Chamber of Commerce's contract with the County; and a
57 meeting on heat pumps in Lansing. The State Theatre received a NYS Council on the Arts grant for general
58 operating support in 2024, and there will be a community meeting on creating safe connections for
59 students and others biking or walking from Ithaca schools (e.g., Boynton Middle, Ithaca High) to the
60 waterfront trail. There is also a new bridge over the flood channel tied to the Black Diamond Trail, and the
61 City of Ithaca Planning Board will be reviewing the DOT site sketch plan for the waterfront. Some members
62 voiced concerns about the impacts of traffic and parking on the Farmers Market. Last, the CVB hosted the
63 Meeting Planners International fall focus event and took participants on tour of the conference center. It
64 was the first time this event was hosted outside the Capital District (Albany).

65

66 **Adjournment** – Vice chair Doug Levine adjourned the meeting at 3:45pm.