

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

1 **Date:** October 21, 2020
 2 **Time:** 3:00-5:00pm
 3 **Location:** Virtual Meeting – Zoom Video Conference

4
 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>Anna Kelles</i>	P	<i>TC Legislature, Non-Voting</i>
Connie Kan	P	At-Large	<i>Heather McDaniel</i>	P	<i>TCAD, Non-Voting</i>
VACANT	N/A	Lodging	<i>Jennifer Tavares</i>	P	<i>Chamber, Non-Voting</i>
Doug Levine	P	Arts-Culture	<i>Scot Vanderpool</i>	A	<i>Transportation, Non-Voting</i>
Kelly Makosch	P	At-Large	<i>Jim Brophy</i>	A	<i>Associate Member</i>
Rick Manning	P	At-Large	<i>Erica Frenay</i>	A	<i>Associate Member</i>
Erin Martea	P	At-Large	<i>Henry Granison</i>	P	<i>Associate Member</i>
Greg Mezey	P	At-Large	<i>Ken Jupiter</i>	E	<i>Associate Member</i>
VACANT	N/A	Ithaca College	<i>Carol Kammen</i>	P	<i>Associate Member</i>
Todd Parlato	P	At-Large	<i>Michael Miller</i>	P	<i>Associate Member</i>
Barbara Romano	P	Cornell University	<i>Jon Reis</i>	A	<i>Associate Member</i>
Monika Roth	P	Agriculture	<i>Wylie Schwartz</i>	E	<i>Associate Member</i>
Deb Mohlenhoff	E	TC3	Nick Helmholdt	P	Tourism Program Director
Steven Stull	P	Arts-Culture	Kristin McCarthy	P	TCDPS
Scott Wiggins	E	At-Large			

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 8 **Guests:** Kurt Anderson, Katie Borgella, Wendy Kobler, Erin Rafalowski, Ronda Roaring

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 10 **Opening Remarks/Changes to the Agenda** – Chair Kelli Cartmill welcomed everyone to the
 11 meeting. In lieu of giving a chair’s report, Kelli yielded her time to County Administrator Jason
 12 Molino, who was there to update the board on the 2021 County budget negotiations and
 13 developments related to the hotel room occupancy tax.

14
 15 **Action: Approval of September 2020 STPB Meeting Minutes** – Brett Bossard moved approval of
 16 the draft Sept. 16, 2020, minutes, which Kelly Makosch seconded. Motion carried.

17
 18 **Privilege of the Floor** – County Historian Carol Kammen updated board about projects underway
 19 with the County Historical Commission. These include publication of educational pamphlets with
 20 titles such as “Explaining Tompkins” and “Living in Tompkins” and design, fabrication and
 21 installation of signage around the County celebrating its ties to Cayuga Nation heritage and the
 22 history of the suffragette movement in the area. Partners for these initiatives include Historic
 23 Ithaca, History Center, and CVB.

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25 **Update: Tompkins County Budget and Room Taxes – Jason Molino, County Administrator**

26
27 In lieu of giving a chair’s report, Kelli yielded the floor to Nick Helmholdt so he could introduce
28 County Administrator Jason Molino. Jason gave an update on room tax collections, the 2021
29 Tompkins County budget, and the proposal to increase room tax rate for small lodging properties
30 from 3 percent to 5 percent. Jason thanked the board members for their hard work on behalf of
31 the County and broader community.

32
33 **Staff Report, Room Tax & Q3 2020 Report – Nick Helmholdt**

34
35 Nick updated the group on room tax collections for the third quarter, including late payments
36 received with additional penalties. At the peak 10 lodging properties were delinquent in paying,
37 but that number has gone down substantially. County will standardize table layout of this report
38 going forward. More details can be found in report included in agenda packet. Members should
39 complete NYS annual sexual harassment prevention training and file related County paperwork at
40 their earliest convenience.

41
42 **CVB Q3 Update – Peggy Coleman and Erin Rafalowski**

43
44 Erin, director of marketing at the CVB, updated board on third-quarter messaging strategies and
45 campaigns. These included promoting outdoor recreation activities, providing specific
46 information in terms of what venues are open and how visitors can enjoy their time here safely
47 by following COVID-19 protocols, fall favorites such as leaf peeping and craft beverages like cider,
48 and virtual takes on in-person event favorites like the Grassroots Music Festival. She also
49 reported on earned media and leveraged relationships with partners like Bobo and Chichi and
50 What’s Open Sherpa Tour, print media placement, website traffic, visitor guide requests, and e-
51 newsletter sign-ups. Positive media coverage of Cornell’s extensive COVID-19 surveillance testing
52 program is helping to connect Ithaca-Tompkins County in people’s minds as a safe destination.
53 Peggy commented that new visitor numbers are up and shared how CVB staff continue to pivot
54 and adjust their outreach as the NYS COVID-19 travel advisory list changes. Laura Winter Falk
55 spoke on how Experience! the Finger Lakes is also navigating business operations and customer
56 service during the pandemic.

57
58 **Conference Center Update – Gary Ferguson**

59 Gary reported on the conference center project. The request for proposals for an operator is due
60 soon. Next steps include interviewing candidates and signing an operator by end of year.
61 Collaboration with developer on construction drawings and addressing potential project gaps in
62 areas like financing. Both houses of NYS Legislature have approved City of Ithaca’s request for a
63 new room tax to support the project. It is now with the Governor’s Office awaiting his approval.

64
65 **Membership & Bylaws Committee Update – Nick Helmholdt**

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67 **Action items: Recommend new and returning members for appointment and reappointment to**
68 **STPB and appoint 2021 Nominating Committee**

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70 Nick provided some brief background on the prospective Lodging seat representative, Arthur
71 Keith. A graduate of the Hotel School at Cornell, he is general manager of the Statler and has
72 worked in hospitality for 30 years in a variety of locations, including Las Vegas and Orlando. In
73 addition, Deb Mohlenhoff and Monika Roth are up for reappointment to the STPB.

74

75 **Action:** Greg Mezey made a motion, which Erin Marteau seconded, to recommend the
76 appointment of Arthur Keith (Lodging) and reappointment of Deb Mohlenhoff (TC3) and Monika
77 Roth (Agriculture) to the Strategic Tourism Planning Board. Motion carried.

78

79 Next, Nick explained the annual process set forth in the STPB bylaws for forming the Nominating
80 Committee. Its members, at least three of whom must hold voting seats, are charged with
81 presenting a slate of officers for the coming year to the full board at the final meeting of the
82 current year. Monika Roth, Doug Levine, and Laura Winter Falk volunteered.

83

84 **Action:** Laura Winter Falk made a motion to appoint Doug Levine, Laura Winter Falk, and Monika
85 Roth to the 2021 Nominating Committee. Steven Stull seconded. Motion carried.

86

87 **Discussion: Recommend amendment to STPB bylaws**

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89 Members talked about revising language in STPB bylaws to include a waiver of term limits for
90 voting members. Two key considerations were whether this action was being considered short
91 term because of the difficulty of recruiting members during the coronavirus pandemic or long
92 term with the goal of letting voting members serve more time on the board. Related issues
93 covered included defining number of term limit extensions allowed, whether to increase term
94 lengths, and a reality check regarding how long it takes for new board members to get up to
95 speed. Membership & Bylaws Committee will meet to discuss further and present
96 recommendations for action by the full STPB at the November 18 meeting.

97

98 **Member Announcements** – Members shared items of interest. These included recent activities of
99 the Outdoor Recreation Committee, including possible development with the CVB of a “Winter
100 Pass” initiative modeled on the Ithaca Loves Teachers Winter Recess program, an update on
101 Cinemapolis and movie theater openings statewide, and virtual offerings by Opera Ithaca.

102

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

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