

Cayuga County Convention & Visitors Bureau
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
February 3, 2026
Via Zoom

Present: Erin Katzker, Kate Grindstaff, Doug Dello Stritto, Amber Gansert-Dagnesi, Kari Terwilliger, Stephen Selvek, Mike Riley, Kate Pelkey, Meg Goloub, Ahna Wilson, Jacob Hamilton, Jessica Schneider, Jackie Schnurr

Staff: Courtney Kasper, Hilary Fenner, Dawn Lubaszewski, Noah Howard, Lynne Sweet,

Absent:

Laura Hahn, Diana Plue Brian DiBernardo AnnaMarie Vukmanovich

Excused:

Kristen Lunkenheimer-Slocum, Aileen McNabb-Coleman

Presiding Officer: E. Katzker

Secretary: A. Vukmanovich

The meeting was called to order at 8:31am by E. Katzker

I. TAP and LaLew presented final public relations report for 2025

II. Approval of Minutes

The December minutes were presented for approval.

A motion to approve the December minutes, Public Relations and Marketing Plan, was made by K. Terwilliger, seconded by J. Hamilton. All were in favor, and the motion was approved.

III. Treasurer's Report (D. Dello Stritto)

The financials were distributed to the board. Further budget discussion will take place in subsequent reports.

A motion to approve the Treasurer's Report was made by A. Gansert-Dagnesi, seconded by J. Schneider. All were in favor, and the motion was approved.

IV. Committee Reports

(a) Executive (E. Katzker):

The Executive Committee discussed upcoming legislative meetings, budget advocacy, and the potential addition of a new board member from the dairy industry.

(b) Education (M. Riley):

C. Kasper reported that the annual meeting and Tourism Summit have been scheduled for June 17th at Emerson Pavilion. The Committee discussed plans for the upcoming event featuring an America 250 theme, awards ceremony, and networking opportunities. They agreed to extend the event duration to accommodate more networking time and activities, including potential table displays from partners. The group discussed inviting a speaker from Oxford Economics to present on tourism advocacy.

(c) Advocacy (K. Grindstaff):

K. Grindstaff reported on advocacy initiatives, including the successful kickoff of a fundraising incubator with 12 participants and plans to expand their grant program to support broader partner activities. C. Kasper presented the first of five planned monthly videos about tourism in Cayuga County, highlighting its economic impact.

(d) HR (J. Hamilton):

J. Hamilton discussed updating the organization's handbook to address any compliancy issues, with plans to consult other organizations and an HR professional for guidance.

(e) Audit & Financing (A. Gansert Dagnesi):

The Audit will begin in March. A. Gansert Dagnesi explained the occupancy tax vouchering process, noting that based on the tourism office's projected budget the organization vouchers the county quarterly at 25%, 45%, 15%, and 15%. As predicted, Q3 actual collection was under approximately \$100,000. Projects were pulled beginning in August 2025 from predicting to be underspent by \$130,000. The Q4 voucher for November 1, 2025, was overpaid at the full \$192,000 before collections were complete and has been resolved with the county treasurer's office to reduce Q1 February 1, 2026, voucher by approximately \$85,000. C. Kasper clarified that the organization needs to maintain at least \$254,000 in reserves at the start of each new fiscal calendar year to cover potential shortfalls in Q1 actual collection payment.

A motion was made by E. Katzker to authorize the Executive Director, C. Kasper to request a line of credit for (up to) \$250,000 line of credit, it was seconded by J. Hamilton. All were in favor, and the motion was approved.

(f) Planning (K. Terwilliger):

The committee reviewed the PR and Marketing plans

A motion to approve the committee reports was made by J. Hamilton and seconded by J. Schneider. All were in favor, and the motion was approved.

IV. Marketing (H. Fenner)

Hilary provided a comprehensive update on recent and upcoming initiatives. She highlighted the completion of a new groups guide and successful networking at a conference in Reno, where she promoted the Finger Lakes to about 30 bus tour companies. Hilary discussed the marketing audit results, which showed strengths in brand awareness but identified opportunities to improve conversion rates and reach younger audiences. She outlined upcoming projects including the luxury campaign, development of a group inventory database, creation of brand guidelines, and planning for a social media workshop for partners. Hilary also mentioned attending the Destinations International Marketing and Communications Summit in Cleveland at the end of February.

VI. PR (N. Howard):

Noah provided a comprehensive update on public relations activities in January, focusing on three key areas: advancing the 2026 media trip pipeline, promoting winter visitation through Restaurant Week and Hibernation, and maintaining Cayuga County's visibility through earned media and partner support. He highlighted progress on media trip planning with potential visits from award-winning travel writers, continued monthly media outreach, and successfully earned media placements including a feature on Big Blend Radio and articles in Resident Magazine

and LeisureGroupTravel.com. Noah also discussed the development of a Frontline Tourism Ambassador pass program to enhance partner engagement and visitor experience and encouraged the team to review his 2026 PR plan for alignment with the strategic plan.

VII. Executive Director (C. Kasper):

Courtney discussed what she learned at International Media Marketplace. The Finger Lakes region was named the top trending destination for 2026 by Airbnb, following recent recognition as Wine Region of the Year. The team discussed the upcoming bicentennial celebration of the abolition of slavery in New York State in 2027, which will align with the opening of Phase 1 of the Harriet Tubman Byway project between June and September. The byway's new website, managed by Niagara Falls, features a logo created by descendant panel and has generated interest from journalists like Robin Catalano for a potential Juneteenth story. While national occupancy tax collections have seen a slight dip due to economic factors and reduced international visitorship, Cayuga County's visitor spending remains steady at 6% year over year, with an increase in Florida winter visitation noted. Courtney discussed the short-term rental registry situation, noting that despite legislative efforts to opt out, the county is now automatically opted in, with ongoing discussions about potential future changes in New York State laws. She also shared insights from recent I Love New York events, including a Black Travel Media Night and a Travel and Adventure Show, highlighting the importance of the Finger Lakes region in New York's Black history and the need to educate consumers about its central location in the state.

A motion to approve the Marketing, Public Relations and Executive Director reports was made by A. Gansert-Dagnesi and seconded by J. Schneider. All were in favor, and the motion was approved.

VI. Unfinished Business (E. Katzker):

None

VII. Announcements:

- **Gansert-Dagnesi -Charcuterie board class at Quarry Ridge Winery on Sunday, February 8, 2026.**
- **E. Katzker – Simon and Garfunkel tribute show at The Rev on February 11, 2026.**

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made at 9:55.am by K. Terwilliger and seconded by J. Schneider. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned.

Approved by K. Terwilliger

Recorded by Lynne Sweet