

Cayuga County Convention & Visitors Bureau

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

November 4, 2025

Via Zoom

Present: Erin Katzker, Kate Grindstaff, Doug Dello Stritto, Amber Gansert-Dagnesi, Kari Terwilliger, AnnaMarie Vukmanovich, Stephen Selvek, Diana Plue, Jessica Schneider

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

Absent: Aileen McNabb-Coleman, Mike Riley, Laura Hahn, Brian DiBernardo, Kate Pelkey

Excused: Jackie Schnurr, Meg Goloub, Kristen Lunkenheimer-Slocum, Ahna Wilson, Jacob Hamilton

Presiding Officer: E. Katzker

Secretary: A. Vukmanovich

The meeting was called to order at 8:34am by E. Katzker

The meeting opened with welcoming Hilary Fenner as the new Director of Marketing and Sales and Jessica Schneider as the new Board Director representing the Hilton Garden Inn

I. Travel Alliance Partnership Third Quarter Report

Brittany Lynn presented the Q3 report for Travel Alliance Partnership and LaLew Public Relations, highlighting their efforts to uphold Harriet Tubman's legacy through strategic media engagement and content creation. The team achieved several earned media placements and hosted a September media group fam to promote International Underground Railroad Month. They also created new content showcasing local businesses and attractions, while working towards 2025 goals including meeting with 30 media members, hosting 8 media visits, partnering with 4 content creators, and securing 30 pieces of media coverage. The team reviewed their Q3 media outreach efforts, highlighting successful placements in various publications including AAA, Sheen Magazine, Black Enterprise, and National Geographic Traveler. Jessica Riddick presented proactive pitching topics around historical events and landmarks, while Jessica Lewis highlighted key placements that drove significant traffic to the destination, including features on Harriet Tubman's legacy and the Life and Freedom mural in Auburn. Brittany mentioned attending the International Media Marketplace in January 2026, where they will continue building relationships with media contacts.

II. Approval of Minutes

The October minutes were presented for approval.

A motion to approve the October minutes was made by K. Terwilliger, seconded by A. Gansert-Dagnesi. All were in favor, and the motion was approved.

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

D. Dello Stritto reported a smooth financial transition and continued TPA designation. No surprises with financials.

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

IV. Committee Reports

(a) Executive (E. Katzker):

E. Katzker shared updates from the Executive Committee meeting, including Karen's transition and committee work plans, and discussed her speech at the October 28 Legislature Meeting advocating short-term rental language changes and data tracking.

(b) Education (D. Plue): The Education Committee discussed combining their annual meeting and tourism summit into a single event on June 2nd, with a theme of "America 250" for the awards. Mike Riley was confirmed as the new Education Committee chair, and the group agreed to continue discussions about reinventing the frontline FAM tour.

(c) Advocacy (K. Grindstaff)

Kate reported the advocacy committee discussed aligning the event grant with the 250th anniversary and waiting for outstanding grant reports. They reviewed advocacy videos and planned to create more, while also adding eight new sites for Wheel the World. Kate and Courtney announced a partnership with consultant Charlene Tarver to help county nonprofits improve fundraising through an incubator program, with a mix and mingle event scheduled for November 6th.

(d) HR (C. Kasper):

The HR committee reported on the need for new members and discussed onboarding two to three new board members, including Lisa Chase from The REV to replace Erin, and identified potential candidates from northern Cayuga County for future board representation.

(e) Audit and Finance (A. Gansert- Dagnesi)

Amber discussed the status of various financial matters, including the transfer of accounts to the new executive director and the pending reimbursement from the Market New York grant, which Hilary and Courtney are working on.

1) Draft Budget Review (C. Kasper): Courtney reported that Q4 occupancy tax was submitted but not yet received, with predictions of \$66,000-\$67,000, and explained that \$150,000 had already been cut from programs to address budget concerns. The team reviewed the 2026 draft budget, which includes various cuts and adjustments, with Courtney noting that while the budget is balanced, they may need to adjust numbers based on occupancy tax revenue and health insurance rates. They also discussed the possibility of taking out a line of credit and potentially reinstating some programs if additional funding becomes available.

(f) The committee discussed budget timing and flexibility, with Kari explaining that the county could change allocations through a public hearing process, requiring a 2-month notice period. They agreed to maintain both 95% and 75% funding levels in the budget to allow for potential mid-year adjustments. The group reviewed their meeting schedule for the upcoming year and discussed extending the timeline for Courtney, Noah and Hilary to work on PR and marketing plans through January. They also considered revising the approach to the lodging study, potentially expanding it to include all types of lodging options rather than focusing solely on niche boutique hotels.

A motion to approve the committee reports was made by K. Terwilliger and seconded by D. Dello Stritto. All were in favor, and the motion was approved.

V. Marketing (H. Fenner)

Hilary provided updates on various marketing and promotional activities. She reported on conference registrations, including ABA, PBA, and Tap Dance, and mentioned resending a survey. Hilary discussed a successful photo shoot with Matt Baldelli and collaboration with SnapSea for user-generated content. She highlighted the success of the "Where You Go Matters, Make It Count" social media campaign, noting a significant reduction in cost per click. Hilary also mentioned approving a Hibercation media plan with PaperKite for December to March and plans to increase activity on the Tour Cayuga LinkedIn

page. She concluded by discussing the Market New York grant, noting the deadline for reimbursement and the remaining balance to be billed by Travel Alliance Partners.

VI. PR (N. Howard):

Noah reported strong PR results for October, highlighted by a successful Frontline Familiarization Tour attended by 23 local hospitality workers despite challenging weather. Noah highlighted media coverage including *Wine Enthusiast Magazine* naming Finger Lakes as 2026 Wine Region of the Year and Timeout.com featuring Long Point State Park.

VII. Executive Director (C. Kasper):

Courtney discussed transition efforts with former Executive Director Karen Kuhl, noting that the Char500 has been filed, SFS grants gateway renewed, ESD ILNY MF application submitted, plus onboarding new Board Director Jessica Schneider and Hilary Fenner as Director of Marketing and Sales. She reported on plans for new luxury campaigns and accessibility initiatives, including 8 new sites being assessed by Wheel The World. Courtney also reviewed upcoming advocacy videos, an advocacy public relations campaign with Belesai Communications, and gave a report on community engagement efforts, including a recap of the Cayuga Lake Communities event and plans for a Cayuga Cuisine themed tree at Ward O'Hara's Festival of Trees.

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

VI. Unfinished Business (K. Terwilliger):

No unfinished business.

VII. Announcements:

- **K. Terwilliger:** The Cayuga County Planning Office will be decorating a tree at the Ward O'Hara Agricultural Museum for the Festival of Trees and the theme will be the county wide strategic plan. She encouraged everyone to come see it, take the survey and vote.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made at 9:45am by A. Gansert- Dagnesi and seconded by S. Selvek. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned.

Approved by Kari Terwilliger

Recorded by Lynne Sweet