

**Cortland County Convention & Visitors Bureau
February 26, 2026 Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
In-Person Meeting at 42 Main Street, Cortland**

Directors Present: Ilya Shmulenson, Tabitha Scoville, Tammy Timmerman, Kim Thayer, Chris Merkley, Sam Ferro, Savannah Hempstead, Molly Reagan, Eric Mulvihill

Directors Excused: Dianne Galutz, Carly Dougherty, Ty Marshal

Directors Absent: Shine Gonzalez

Advisory Members Present: Keith VanGorder

Advisory Members Excused:

Staff Present: Michelle Enright, Candace Rozansky

Guests: Cassie Williams (CVB SUNY Intern)

President I. Shmulenson called the meeting to order at 8:04am.

Board Introductions:

Board members went around the table for introductions for new members.

Meeting Minutes:

The January Board Meeting minutes were reviewed and accepted.

Financials:

T. Timmerman reviewed the January financial report. She noted that the CVB received the first batch of County funding (\$311,717), as well as the ILNY matching funds award (\$60,684). The Tourism Marketing Grants Committee met to review submitted applications, and funding recommendations were approved by the Finance & Administration Committee; final approval is scheduled for the County Legislative Session this evening. Work continues with the bookkeeper to update the financial reports, and that the format will remain consistent for now. The CVB also paid its regional commitment of \$57,868.

M. Enright added that the regional commitment includes \$20,500 for participation and \$37,368 to support programming such as Brave Women FLX, the Winter PR Campaign, Haunted History Trail NYS, America250.

President's Report:

President I. Shmulenson reported he met with the Executive Director to discuss potential new revenue sources for the CVB. Shared that the second community discussion regarding occupancy tax is scheduled for March 5 at 8:30am at the Grange Building.

Executive Director's Report:

M. Enright reported on the activities of the CVB since the last Board meeting. Tourism Marketing Grant Committee met on February 13 and reviewed 12 applications; funding recommendations were approved by the Finance & Admin Committee and will go to the Legislature for final approval. Awardees will be required to attend an introductory meeting prior to vouchering. The City approved an increase to the City occupancy tax by 3%, and the CVB will monitor impacts on occupancy. Staff developed sponsorship packets for the CVB's three primary events, as well as a Roots & Rhythm–

specific packet. A Main Street banner was created to welcome athletes and will be used for major sporting events, beginning with the NIRSA Basketball Tournament on March 6–8. The winter social media campaign delivered over 150K impressions, reached over 96K users, and drove over 12K engaged landing page visits, with markets including Buffalo, Albany, Scranton, NYC, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh. The Winter Postcard Challenge launched with 250 postcards distributed and 55 completed postcards collected to date. The America 250 brand toolkit, FLX Heritage Map, and coloring book are nearing completion and will be added to the America 250 landing page on the Experience Cortland website. Planning for She Shines continues with eight confirmed vendors and a marketing campaign launching the first week of March, including paid social and radio (WXHC and Cayuga Media Group).

The Board discussed the importance of clearer information around how occupancy tax dollars are being allocated, noting it's challenging to evaluate impacts without a better understanding of where funds are being directed. Members also noted the broader changes happening with both City and County occupancy taxes and emphasized the need to continue conversations with legislators about the long-term effects. Staff clarified that the County determines how the County occupancy tax is allocated, while the City determines how the additional City occupancy tax is used, and noted the City was able to increase its rate to 3% under home rule authority without State approval. The Board also discussed potential future funding options, including looking into a CFA application to support the 2027 Roots & Rhythm event.

Digital Marketing Manager Report:

C. Rozansky reported that social media performance is steady during a slower seasonal period. Collaborations with 2 content creators generated 90,000+ views, and adjusting posting times has improved performance on TikTok. Staff also reported that social media support provided to Lime Hollow contributed to 258% audience growth over the past 30 days, and reminded Board members that this partner support service is available to everyone. Two interns are currently supporting projects, including Annalise (history major), who is developing a Cortland Curiosities Trail concept focused on the Peck Memorial Library.

K. VanGorder noted a past Cortland Rural Cemetery event that brought in strong attendance, and suggested it may be a good future fit for the Cortland Curiosities Trail.

Old Business:

1. Occupancy Tax

- The Executive Director reported that a follow-up response to the original Cortland Standard/Homer News coverage of the community occupancy tax discussion was submitted to both outlets, but it was not published.

2. STR Report

- The Executive Director provided a January STR update, noting occupancy tax revenues were slightly higher than in January 2025; Hope Lake Lodge figures are still pending, and K. Thayer will connect with Greek Peak staff to help move the reporting process forward.

New Business:

1. Conflict of Interest Form

- The Board was reminded that several members still need to submit signed Conflict of Interest forms.

2. Bylaws + CVB Handbook

- Reported that a review of the CVB Bylaws and Employee Handbook will take place over the course of 2026 and noted the need for two additional participants; D. Galutz previously offered to assist, and T. Scoville and S. Hempstead volunteered to participate.

3. Media Hits

- Media hits with links were included in the board packet. Highlighted a recent AARP feature on traveling in the United States with mobility considerations, which included Lime Hollow Nature Center and has an estimated readership of 17 million, along with several other notable destinations.

Around the Table:

C. Merkley: Reported a call with SunDog's attorney. Liquor license application is expected to be submitted early next week, with hiring applications to follow.

E. Mulvihill: Reported hosting Alex Kormin, Executive Director of CNY Arts for an arts and culture familiarization tour, including visits to the Dowd Gallery, Ake Gallery, the Corset Factory building, Picture Frame House, and the Country Music Park. Noted positive feedback on Rose Hall and the Center for the Arts. Shared interest in expanding agritourism and discussed the need for business development support in the County, including potential workshop opportunities.

T. Timmerman: Provided updates on State liquor law activity, including an executive order allowing bars to open at 6am on Sunday for the Men's Hockey Olympic Gold Medal game and recent discussions with the SLA Chair regarding bar and restaurant laws. Reported strong turnout at Red Jug and Dark Horse following outreach. Noted the Wine in Grocery Stores bill and a THC-related bill were not included in the State budget. Also shared community updates including the Rite Aid on Route 281 changing use, The Stone Lounge expected to reopen as a Mexican restaurant, and a "Cluck Cortland" campaign being developed to replace Restaurant Week (Wing Walk) from January–June.

S. Hempstead: Reported Pumpkinfest sponsorship outreach has been distributed and vendor applications are expected to go out in late April/early May. Noted the County's America250 webpage is live and event submissions are beginning to come in. Reported ongoing coordination with historians regarding funding priorities for public, free events. Shared planning updates for July 4 programming, including historian and CRT Guild participation in the Main Pavilion and Old Timers Band.

M. Reagan: Reported continued conversations regarding Cortlandville funding and recreation space impacts. Noted Porchfest is scheduled for August 16.

K. Thayer: Reported season passes are on sale (\$635) with an increase to \$699 on Sunday. Hoping the ski season extends into April, with the return of Pond Skimming in April. Reported strong wedding bookings (12 weddings booked in 43 days) and upcoming programming including Easter Brunch and a Mother's Day Slumber Party. Noted leisure travel is down while group travel is up.

T. Scoville: Reported Cortland County Historical Society programming begins in April, including the first of three Lunch & Learns in 2026. Shared upcoming events and planning for America250 speakers, a Mother's Day Brunch, a May open house, and the Timeless Treasure sale.

S. Ferro: Reported NCAA basketball-related hotel stays this weekend. Noted leisure and business travel are down, and the hotel is adjusting group strategy (e.g., late checkouts and holding rooms longer). Shared upcoming group activity including NIRSA and sports tourism demand increasing, with strong bookings for April–September. Reported March is expected to be slower with increased activity in April tied to baseball. Also shared community/program updates, including a cookie decorating class on 3/18 and updates from Nelly's Corner Bakery.

K. VanGorder: Asked about coordination to reduce overlap in major sports and festival scheduling and discussed strategies to encourage overnights. Also asked about potential for bringing a curling league to Cortland County.

I. Shmulenson: Reported a strong winter season and transition into spring programming, including maple sugaring. Noted solar panels are operational. Shared that several programs are sold out, including adult classes, and reported strong interest in the Women in Woods Open House (3/7), capped at 50 with a waitlist. Reported summer camp registration is open and approximately 60% full. Noted Action TrackChair reservations are increasing with warmer weather.

The meeting adjourned at 9:45am.

*Respectfully Submitted,
M. Enright
Executive Director*