

Cortland County Convention & Visitors Bureau
January 29, 2026 Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
In-Person Meeting at 42 Main Street, Cortland

Directors Present: Ilya Shmulenson, Savannah Hempstead, Molly Reagan, Dianne Galutz, Tabitha Scoville, Carly Dougherty, Kim Thayer, Tammy Timmerman, Chris Merkley, Sam Ferro, Ty Marshal

Directors Excused: Shine Gonzalez

Directors Absent: Eric Mulvihill

Advisory Members Present:

Advisory Members Excused: Keith VanGorder

Staff Present: Michelle Enright, Candace Rozansky

Guests: None

President I. Shmulenson called the meeting to order at 8:01 a.m.

Board Introductions:

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

Meeting Minutes:

The December Board Meeting minutes were reviewed and accepted.

Financials:

T. Timmerman reviewed the December financial report. She noted that \$204 in 2025 Tourism Marketing Grant funds awarded in 2025 were not vouchered. The Executive Director is working with the bookkeeper to clean up QuickBooks to simplify reporting and align the financials with the 2026 budget structure. The Treasurer and Executive Director will meet when finalized.

M. Enright noted the year ended in a net loss due to a revenue shortfall under Occupancy Vouchers, as the CVB returned \$140,800 back to the County. The CVB also had over \$40,000 in Sports Council-related expenses that were not budgeted.

President's Report:

President I. Shmulenson reported the stakeholder meeting held the prior week had strong attendance and feedback aligned with what the CVB has been communicating. The President and Executive Director also met to discuss possible future funding options, including grants, sponsorships, and fee-for-service opportunities.

Executive Director's Report:

M. Enright reported on the activities of the CVB since the last Board meeting. The 2026 Marketing Plan and Budget was approved by the County Budget & Finance Committee. Currently waiting for the first batch of funding. Tourism Marketing Grant applications are due January 30, and the committee will meet the week of February 9. Committee members include Keith VanGorder, Kelly Tobin, Amy Buggs, Tammy Timmerman, and Kim Thayer. Work continues on the 2026 Travel Guide. Thirteen organizations are confirmed for advertising, totaling \$16,415 in revenue. The guide is scheduled to go to print in late March, with distribution in April. For Experience Cortland Sports, the final EDA grant report was submitted on January 8. The digital kiosk has been delivered and

discussions continue with the Town of Cortlandville and the City regarding a permanent installation location. Marketing collateral is in development, including hotel table tents, event pop-ups for tabling, and digital assets. Work is underway with Staybook and PBR to promote Experience Cortland to incoming teams and families through booking sites and email communications. Launching the Winter Postcard Challenge, with postcards available at the Visitors Center, Lime Hollow Nature Center, and the Center for the Arts of Homer. A content creator visit took place in January and content is now being published. America 250 planning is underway in coordination with the Finger Lakes region to develop shared collateral and assets, and a local landing page is being built to house regional materials along with Cortland County-specific events and information as they become available. Staff is developing a sponsorship packet for the CVB's three main events, and reviewing potential projects for 2026 grant applications.

Digital Marketing Manager Report:

C. Rozansky reported strong performance in January, including a major increase in link clicks and a 92% increase in interactions. A Waterworks Instagram reel created by Molly Reagan received 2,600 views on the Experience Cortland account. The Curiosity Trail content saw about 300K views in the last month, and related reels reached over 100,000 views. Candace shared she has been helping Lime Hollow Nature Center with social media support and reminded board members that these services are available to tourism partners. She noted Facebook continues to perform best for local audiences.

I. Schmulenson discussed the need for the CVB to better communicate its work locally and suggested developing a coordinated print and social campaign focused on public awareness.

Old Business:

1. Occupancy Tax

- The Board discussed submitting a follow-up guest column to the Cortland Standard and Homer News from a tourism perspective. Recommended messaging include occupancy tax is self-funded, fewer stays means less revenue. Include total tourism spending dollars and how much occupancy dollars are generated.
- Board members noted that while leisure travel may be down, group travel and longer-distance travel appear to be up, including visitors from markets like Ohio and Vermont.
- The Board discussed hotel pricing concerns with 5% occupancy tax plus the city occupancy tax. Members noted demand is high and room rates have increased.

2. STR Report

- The Executive Director noted year-end STR figures were slightly lower in 2025 compared to 2024. Hope Lake Lodge is not currently included in the STR data.
- STR confirmed Hope Lake Lodge is now in the system and can report, but figures will need to be manually entered. K. Thayer will follow up with Greek Peak.

New Business:

1. Conflict of Interest Form

- Board members who have not submitted a signed Conflict of Interest Form were asked to email it to the Executive Director or bring it to the February meeting.

2. Bylaws + CVB Handbook

- A committee will be formed to review the CVB Bylaws and Board Handbook. Board members interested in participating should notify the Executive Director.

3. Media Hits

- Media hits were included in the packet, including a Snowbrain.com piece highlighting Greek Peak Mountain Resort's Adaptive Ski Program, and Curated Travel Magazine mentioning Lime Hollow Nature Center's Trails for All and Action Track Chair.

Around the Table:

M. Reagan: Cortlandville Youth Bureau funding changes impacting registration and pricing for programs including art camps. Noted differing pricing for Cortlandville vs. City residents and potential impacts to Wickwire Pool membership.

C. Dougherty: Shared operational updates including cabbage deliveries and winter production. Noted weather impacts on Main Street Farms operations. Shared that Trinity Valley is purchasing Reake's and will be including an ice cream stand.

K. Thayer: Shared updates on the upcoming FASNY Winter Games and seasonal pass launch. Noted strong ticket sales for a college night partnership. Shared ongoing Burgers and Brews events and continued programming.

T. Scoville: early scheduling updates for 2026 continue and noted arrival of a historic marker.

D. Galutz: Noted over 300 attendees for auditions for the summer season and upcoming events including Valentine's Day burlesque show and March Murder Mystery Dinner. Will be absent from the February meeting.

I. Shmulenson: Shared Lime Hollow winter updates, including rentals, programs, and upcoming adult classes. Also noted security camera installation after recent issues at trailheads.

C. Merkley: Rose Hall has seen increased interest in lessons, recording sessions, and rehearsal space. Provided updates on Sun Dog building progress and local mural work.

S. Hempstead: Poet Laureate position applications are due February 13 and provided America 250 guidance that funding must support events that are open and free to the public.

T. Timmerman: Attended the PGA trade show in Florida and noted Restaurant Week challenges. Shared a 2027 Chicken Wing Trail concept. Noted State-level activity related to liquor laws and a bill signed in December.

S. Ferro: Shared hotel activity tied to winter weather, and sports tournaments. Noted recent inspection went very well and recent property updates.

T. Marshal: Reported that Center for the Arts is using AI to empower faculty and employees, adding AI technology including voicemail transcription. Also shared production initiatives such as a grant-funded production suite buildout, and work related to public access programming. Shared interest in hosting a public discussion on AI and noted upcoming concerts.

The meeting adjourned at 9:47am.

Respectfully Submitted,

M. Enright

Executive Director