

**Tompkins County IDA Meeting Minutes
October 21, 2011
County Courthouse Conference Room
320 N. Tioga Street, Ithaca, NY**

Present: Martha Robertson, Dan Cogan, Jeff Furman, Nathan Shinagawa, Will Burbank, Larry Baum, Ed Marx

Excused: Jim Dennis

Staff Present: Heather Filiberto, Michael Stamm, Mariette Geldenhuys

Guests Present: Liz Lawler (Ithaca Journal), Andy Sciarabba (Community Rec Center), Joan Jurkowich

CALL TO ORDER Ms. Robertson called the meeting to order at 3:50 PM.

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA - None

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

BUSINESS

Community Recreation Center Refinance Resolution

Mr. Stamm commented that this is a project that the IDA assisted a few years ago. They are refinancing the existing debt to get a lower interest rate. Mr. Sciarabba commented on lowering the interest rate – no new money. This will save \$700 month.

Dan Cogan moved to approve the resolution. Will Burbank seconded the motion.

Mr. Sciarabba stated that Activity is good; there is now an indoor soccer field as well as the ice rink. Mr. Baum disclosed that he was involved with the project prior to 2001.

The motion passed unanimously.

NYSEG Easement Resolution – IMR Test Labs Project

Ms. Geldenhuys – this is one of the projects were IDA still holds title, thus the need to approve the easement request from NYSEG. It is a standard utility expansion.

Dan Cogan moved to approve the resolution. Jeff Furman seconded the motion.

This is for a housing development.

Mr. Furman would like to have the IDA confer with the leaseholder in writing prior to moving forward with these kinds of requests so we have a record of it.

The motion passed unanimously.

Tompkins County Planning Department: Development Focus Areas

Mr. Marx and Ms. Jurkowich of the Planning Department presented information on development focus areas for the county. They wanted the IDA to know what is being worked on and how this might impact future projects. Comprehensive plan adopted in 2004 and identified various focus areas and the need to develop compact walk able communities utilizing existing infrastructure etc. Housing strategy also developed and identified focal housing areas. There are four types – urban center/established (city of Ithaca, Town of Ithaca); nodes/established (Trumansburg, Groton, Dryden, Varna, Newfield area); emerging nodes (Freeville, S. Lansing, NYSEG area); rural centers (hamlets).

What is needed to help the process – need density and design. 2,500 people seem to be a critical mass to help these nodes survive. Pedestrian amenities are key to the design. Sprawl containment is also important.

Mr. Furman asked about involvement with City of Ithaca Planning Department. Mr. Marx stated that they have met with City staff.

Mr. Cogan asked about housing units for village nodes – 1,200 – not that they are losing housing, but households are getting smaller. Village of Groton once had higher population, but they are losing population and are struggling a bit. It's about having population to support the local businesses.

Ms. Robertson thanked Mr. Marx and Ms. Jurkowich.

Lansing Town Center Incentive Zone Policy

Ms. Filiberto gave background to the community's work and vision for the Lansing Town Center. Public input and County Planning input were included.

The Town of Lansing has endorsed the policy. So it is back to the IDA for final approval. She highlighted a comment on page 5 regarding the application process. Public hearing language has been modified.

Mr. Furman commented on the lack of consistency with the IDA's policy on public hearings – whether holding a public hearing is just to gather more information and move the process or if it indicates a favorable disposition towards a project.

Mr. Baum agreed with Mr. Furman and commented on developers that come to the IDA and their expectations – if they meet the criteria that the project will be moved along. Now it will say we “may.” Mr. Furman stated that he is okay with either wording but would like constancy.

Mr. Sciarabba commented on Town's progress. They are starting to work on a business park on about 30 acres of land.

Mr. Cogan commented that this is similar to the City of Ithaca's density policy that has a height requirement. Is there some sort of density component to this policy? Mr. Sciarabba responded that the Town and City are different in terms of infrastructure available. The town is trying to promote development in a specific area.

Mr. Stamm commented that developers need a level of certainty of how things will move forward.

Mr. Cogan stated that if this is very successful and many single story buildings start popping up, then perhaps the policy could be revisited. He also commented on financial need of a project.

Mr. Cogan commented on how IDA PILOTs are "front loaded" with a 7 year PILOT since most of the need is in the beginning – this eliminates need to demonstrate need.

Ms. Filiberto commented that projects that required independent analysis really did not help with understanding of need. These were costly and caused anxiety. This policy is to give incentive to develop in the town center versus on rural land.

Mr. Burbank does not like the idea of giving incentives when there is no need. Knows it is hard to determine.

Mr. Furman stated that if we don't have ability to determine need then we should get the ability.

Mr. Cogan stated that IDA projects are linked to job creation. This policy does not have this. He also commented that the board does not have expertise to review financial documents.

Mr. Stamm stated that TCAD staff can do credit analysis either with in house staff and volunteer from the community. The key is for IDA board to rely on staff expertise.

Mr. Furman would like to have staff review and certify financial need.

Ms. Robertson stated this policy is for a smaller area than city. Especially with housing in this case if there are no incentives it may be hard to have housing and create density in a specific area. The whole idea is to jump start growth.

Mr. Stamm wanted to make sure IDA understands that staff can give a financial review of smaller projects, but for the larger City policy, staff does not have capability to do risk analysis.

Mr. Baum attests to the expertise of staff and other experts. He also pointed out that the idea is to create density and projects that might not have a need.

Mr. Burbank asked what the purpose is today.

Mr. Cogan moved to strike language that all projects must demonstrate a financial need. Mr. Baum seconded the motion.

Ms. Robertson asked if we could have a standard abatement x and then if financial need is demonstrated then additional abatement/benefit could be offered.

Mr. Stamm stated that if we think of other incentive programs – if no incentive some go elsewhere or if no incentive they do not proceed.

Mr. Cogan asked what is meant for need? Is there a gap where they cannot proceed without incentives? Also, how do we evaluate our “need” to have them locate in a specific location? It is very difficult.

Mr. Burbank commented that the most compelling reason to locate in the town center is to be close to other businesses. This creates a synergy. Doing an in house evaluation is okay and he would be open to a two tier process.

Mr. Sciarabba commented on the open public nature of meetings and financials of a project. He talked about the great need to the community versus just demonstrating a financial need. Lansing wants to grow tax base and jobs.

Ms. Jurkowich commented on situation of the Village of Trumansburg here businesses are opening outside the Village due to the increase of taxes.

Ms. Robertson commented on standard abatement – 7 years starting at 90% abatement and declining. Would this still work for this policy? And then for demonstrated need have a 10 year starting at 100%. Mr. Sciarabba stated that the key is the first two years for financial help. 7 years would be fine.

Vote was called on motion on the table. The motion passed.

Ms. Robertson moved to add under “Incentive Package” “the IDA may negotiate additional abatements based on financial need.” Mr. Burbank seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Sales Tax Abatement discussion of abating both local and State portions of sales tax on construction materials, equipment and furnishings associated with the project.

Support of hiring women and minority employees was discussed.

Mr. Furman commented on public hearing language and keeping it consistent.

Mr. Furman commented that he is supportive of this policy, but due to the language and discussion about financial need he will vote against the policy. Mr. Burbank also commented that he would also vote against the policy for similar reasons.

Mr. Baum moved to accept the Lansing Town Center Incentive Zone Policy as amended. Mr. Shinagawa seconded the motion. The motion passed 5 yes, 2 no.

Letters of Support

Ms. Filiberto asked for letters of support for two Empire State Development/NYS Consolidated Funding applications for the Ithaca Incubator Feasibility study and a business park near the Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport.

STAFF REPORT

Ground breaking for Ithaca Beer, ribbon cutting for Lansing Market and soon Cortland Produce.

MINUTES

Will Burbank moved to approve the board minutes from the August 17, 2011 meeting. Jeff Furman seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 5:50 PM