

**Tompkins County Industrial Development Agency
Board of Directors Meeting Final Minutes
February 9, 2017
Tompkins County Legislative Offices
121 E. Court Street, Ithaca, NY**

Present: Jim Dennis, Rich John, Jennifer Tavares, Martha Robertson, Will Burbank, Svante Myrick

Staff Present: Heather McDaniel, Ina Arthur, Mariette Geldenhuys

Guests Present: Mary Stazi (The Computing Center), Martha Armstrong (TCAD), Irene Wisner (Town of Caroline), Don Scheffler (Town of Groton)

CALL TO ORDER

Jim Dennis called the meeting of the **Tompkins County Industrial Development Agency** to order at 4:00 pm.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Don Scheffler (Town of Groton) Mr. Scheffler is the Supervisor of the Town of Groton. He is concerned about the draft IDA Solar Policy. He feels that that is giving away a lot of money. He is not opposed to solar but if the project is viable, it shouldn't need government help. He would rather see local municipalities negotiate PILOT agreements with solar projects rather than the County IDA. He would like the towns to be informed and wants an option to opt out of IDAs' policies.

Irene Wisner (Town of Caroline) Ms. Wisner spoke on the solar policy as well. She referenced an upcoming discussion of the policy at the TCCOG meeting. She suggested also including the County Assessor and possibly solar installers. She also spoke in favor of the Computing Center Application. She also referenced the State's efforts to incentivize geo-thermal projects.

BUSINESS

2017 Board Officers

Jim Dennis nominated Martha Robertson to serve as Vice Chair of the TCIDA Board for 2017. Will Burbank seconded the motion. The motion was approved 6-0.

Jim Dennis nominated Svante Myrick to serve as Secretary of the TCIDA Board 2017. Rich John seconded the motion. The motion was approved 6-0.

Delaware River Solar I, II, III – Update

Ms. McDaniel reported that an attorney has been retained to oversee the SEQR process for these projects. They have in turn retained a consultant to review all the documents. A

letter notifying taxing jurisdictions as to the IDA being the lead agency was sent out. A public hearing was held for all the projects. The majority of comments were on land use which is not in the IDA's purview. There were also questions on the amount of the PILOT. It is anticipated that the projects will return at the March IDA meeting for final approval.

Ms. Robertson commented on the public hearing – perhaps as we have done in the past, the developer could give a brief overview of the project.

Ms. Tavares asked if we could find out the total acreage for the projects that would be taken out of farming. She also asked for the breakdown amount the municipalities as to how much money they would get.

Mr. Dennis commented that the IDAs goal is to promote renewable energy projects that fit into the County's energy road map plan.

Ms. McDaniel commented that prior to coming the IDA, Delaware River Solar was in negotiations with the Town of Newfield and had settled on a total of \$18,500 (for 2MW) – there was no mention of an annual escalator. Under NYS 487, the Town can negotiate a 15 year PILOT. Since the company wanted a longer PILOT the Town's attorney suggested bringing in the TCIDA so a longer PILOT could be negotiated. This led to the development of the draft Solar Policy. That policy suggests \$16,000 for 2MW annually with a 2% escalator each year. This is versus the Town's \$18,500 for 2MW with a 1% escalator (the escalator was suggested later). The difference in cost to the Town would be about \$400/year.

Ms. Robertson commented, while this seems like a small amount, it is not small to the Town of Newfield.

Off-Site Solar Policy – Continued Discussion

Ms. McDaniel commented on the draft solar policy and policies from the IDA in general – in the future it might help to alleviate a lot of questions, if other taxing jurisdictions were notified when the TCIDA was updating or changing its Uniform Tax Exempt Policy (UTEP) and a date given for discussion at an IDA meeting. Staff is continuing to gather comments on the draft solar policy.

Mr. John also commented on Albany working on changes to its policy on solar projects and NYS 487. Things are moving fast and may change in the future.

The Computing Center – Application

Ms. McDaniel introduced Mary Stazi, CEO of the Computing Center. She presented the company's application. They are applying for the enhanced energy abatement as a deviation of the IDA's UTEP. Ms. McDaniel asked that the application be accepted as complete and moved to a public hearing.

Ms. Stazi commented that the company has been in business for 35 years and would like to build its own building. They are also a NYS MWBE.

Ms. Robertson asked about the NYS energy tax credits they will be receiving as mentioned in the application. They don't seem to show up in the costs/income on the application. Ms. McDaniel explained that they are credits that come after they company pays for the work – so they are not part of the financing. Mr. John suggested that the amount be shown in public sources with an asterisk or put on page 8.

Mr. Rich asked what the difference would be between the standard PILOT and the Energy Enhanced PILOT.

Ms. McDaniel stated that the abatements for the standard would be: \$55,887 and the abatements for the enhanced would be \$85,084.

Mr. Myrick commented that he is fully in favor of this project as well as the Foundation's request for funding – he asked to be excused from the meeting.

There was discussion on the assumed increase in assessment.

Jim Dennis commented on how public hearings are set up in terms of finding a date. Two dates will be found and forwarded to Board members to see if they can attend.

Martha Robertson moved to accept the application as complete (with proposed edits) and to send The Computing Center Application to a public hearing. Rich John seconded the motion.

Ms. Robertson commented on working on diversity. Ms. Stazi stated that they are working on this and feel that this is very important – the issue is finding qualified candidates of any color or gender. Ms. Stazi also indicated that the percentage of women is very high for their industry.

A vote was taken. The motion passed 5-0.

Funding Request from Finger Lakes Regional Prosperity Network (aka TCAD Foundation)

Martha Armstrong reminded of the Food Incubator Feasibility Study that the IDA helped to fund. This is the next step – hiring a consultant to flesh out the business plan for the Food Incubator Program. The study found that there are enough companies and resources to support a program and that a program would help to accelerate the food hub in the region. She also spoke of the Foundation's October Forum that centered on the food sector study. There is momentum and a platform to develop the incubation program. The sense is that we should start with a navigator position to help make the connections and help the community of entrepreneurs move forward.

A consultant has been identified – Peter Fairweather.

A larger USDA Grant will be sought in order to fund the navigator position. The request to the TCIDA for the consultant to develop the business plan is up to/not to exceed \$9,950

Ms. Robertson asked where the staff would work – at this point, at TCAD.

Mr. John asked about the deliverable. This is a business plan for the foundation to hire a staff person – a job description, duties, costs – this will help going after the larger USDA grant to fund the position. The foundation doing asset mapping would be done perhaps with an Americorp person.

Mr. Burbank asked how the staff person be funded in the long term. For the first three years, perhaps a USDA grant – as we evolve other resources would be sought. Ms. Armstrong commented that there are other models that could be copied (Denver area) – the executive director position might be the one to look into this further.

Ms. Tavares suggested that this might be a good “Engage Cornell” program. Ms. Armstrong commented that staff has actually started to engage with CALS up at Cornell and the Dean there that is very involved with the food sector.

Rich John moved to approve the funding to Finger Lakes Regional Prosperity Network for up to and not to exceed \$9,950 to fund a consultant to develop a business plan for the next step in the Food Processing Business Incubator Program. Will Burbank seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0.

STAFF REPORT

Ms. McDaniel reported that the Carey Building Project should be closing before March 1st. The Hilton Canopy will begin construction soon as well as Harold’s Square.

The Cayuga Operating Power Plant PILOT has been renegotiated. A tentative agreement has been reached and details are being worked out – this may be ready for the March IDA meeting.

MINUTES

Martha Robertson moved to approve the January 2017 TCIDA Board meeting minutes. Rich John seconded the motion.

Ms. Robertson mentioned a few edits – these will be corrected.

The motion was approved 5-0

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 PM.

Minutes were approved at the March 9, 2017 meeting.