

Tompkins County Industrial Development Agency

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MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING

City Centre Associates, LLC

March 29, 2017

6:30 PM

City Hall of Ithaca

108 East Green Street, 2nd Floor, Ithaca, NY

Present: Heather McDaniel (for Tompkins County Industrial Development Agency), Rich John, Will Burbank, Martha Robertson, Jennifer Tavares (TCIDA Board), John Nicolich, Jeff Smetana (Newman Development), Scott Whitham, Yamila Fournier (Whitham Planning & Design), Teresa Halpert, Peter Bardaglio, Peter Wissoker, Theresa Alt, Mike Leman, Frost Travis, Philly DeSarno, Nick Lambrou, Josh Lower, Todd Fox, George Avramis, Stephanie Hayes, Shari Korthus, Gary Ferguson, Neil Oolie, Seth & Susi Adams, Pete, Meyers

1. Heather McDaniel called the public hearing to order at 5:30 PM
2. Public hearing notice was read.
3. Call for comments.
4. Comments

Teresa Halpert (see attached comments)

Peter Bardaglio: Ex Dir. of Ithaca 2030 District. Goal is to help County meet green house gas goals. Speaking for project. Developers did a great job on energy efficiency efforts. They are trying to meet Ithaca 2030 standards. Project is working with Taitem Engineering as well as NYSERDA and have really set a model for other downtown developers. Also commends them for not utilizing natural gas other than for cooking uses. He would encourage them to use local labor.

Peter Wissoker: Concerned about enhanced abatement schedule. This is to help developer with energy efficiency. Agrees with energy enhancement abatement. But would urge them not to give the standard property tax abatements. Newman Developers is a good semi local developer. But they are very large and have deep pockets. Looking at their financials it seems like the developer is not putting any money into the game. Feels that this is not something to be subsidized. (full comments attached)

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Theresa Alt: The purpose of the IDA is to create jobs. If people can't afford to live in the City then you won't be able to create density. Green features are wonderful, but they are their own reward. The building will be less expensive to run and a desirable place to live. Therefore, I don't think they need to get tax abatements to build green – it is its own reward. Also there should not be tax abatements given to housing that is not affordable.

Mike Cannon: Existing building on the site is a waste of the site. This is a great project. They meet all the CITTAP goals. These units will free up other units that will become affordable. Energy Efficient projects are very costly. To do an affordable housing project they would need a tremendous subsidy.

Frost Travis: (See attached comments) – spoke in favor of project and seconded Mike Cannon's comments.

Philly DeSarno: Supports this project for a number of reasons. She was very vocal about the prior project at this site. This is a great building and a great developer that has listened to the concerns of the City and local residents. This site has been one that has been promoted for development for the last 12 years. This is the last of the great under developed corners in the City. This is the best project for this site.

Nick Lambrou: He supports the project. It is a beautiful building. He spoke of the Hilton/Cascade Plaza project that also needed abatements – it was a game changer for downtown. Abatements are meant for game changer projects. He is not sure this project is one. Urged the board to be careful with the message they are sending.

Josh Lower: It is a nice building. But he does not support abatements. He does not think that in this climate and on this site they are necessary. Market rate housing is being created without abatements – why for this project? In regards to parking, we as a city have an over supply of parking and are losing a lot of money on the parking structures. Looking at the developer's project – they will ultimately lose money on these spaces. Why are we subsidizing this parking that will pull from the public garages? Let's not subsidize developers to build luxury apartments.

Todd Fox: Local developer. From a business standpoint this will hurt my business. But I do feel it will enhance downtown. Personally feel it is a good project. Feels that they do need the abatements. There was a prior developer with \$1M into soft costs that walked away when there was no widespread support for their project.

George Avramis: Worried about the infrastructure – traffic from Collegetown to Downtown is dangerous for pedestrians and bicyclers. Would like to see more work on the infrastructure and flow before abatements given out. (handed out a petition from other collegetown landlords – attached)

Stephanie Hayes: I like the project but I don't like the tax abatements. I've worked here since 1998. I couldn't afford to live here, still can't without the amazing family I have. She agrees with Mr. Lower's comments on parking. Who is going to give back? Who will work here in the building? How will it help people like me and my kids?

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Shari Korthus: Feels the project is too big, worried about sewage and water. Who will this serve? Faculty, students – it won't server our underserved community. Feels this will push out the underserved community. All the efforts to consolidate and save tax payer's money. This seems to be doing the opposite. We need more diversity in who is downtown.

Gary Ferguson: Supports the project. This parcel was torn down during urban renewal and rebuilt as a one-story building. It served the community well. Now the site is zoned for high density. This project was also designed for the CIITAP program, which provides tax incentives to reach the goals of CIITAP. These goals will serve the community in the future. This brings more housing in the community. This will help prices to moderate.

Neil Oolie: I know how much I pay in rent. Taxes go up, my rent goes up. Giving tax abatements will increase taxes and will increase my rent. We can't afford this project. Feels that college students will take up housing as Cornell and Ithaca College keep increasing their class sizes. Feels that abatements will be his tax dollars going into the developer's pockets.

5. The hearing was adjourned at 6:13PM

Other Comments received: Michael Cannon; Gary Ferguson, Downtown Ithaca Alliance; Elmira Savings Bank; Tom Schryver; Simeon's on The Commons