

Tompkins County Industrial Development Agency

ADMINISTRATION PROVIDED BY 

MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING

Hotel Ithaca LLC

March 12, 2013

4:30 PM

Court Room, Town of Ithaca

215 N. Tioga Street, Ithaca NY

Present: Heather Filiberto, Ina Arthur (for Tompkins County Industrial Development Agency), Matt Jelazo, Steve Urgo (Hotel Ithaca), Martha Robertson, Nathan Shinagawa, Jim Dennis, Will Burbank, Grace Chiang (TCIDA Board), members of the public

Heather Filiberto called the public hearing to order at 4:35 pm. Ms. Filiberto stated the following:

“Good afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen. My name is Heather Filiberto, and I am the Director of Economic Development Services at Tompkins County Area Development, The administrative entity for the Tompkins county industrial development agency (the IDA). I will conduct today’s public hearing. Ina Arthur, TCAD staff will record the minutes of the hearing today. I will ask that the IDA Board members introduce themselves. The members of the Board present introduced themselves.

This hearing is being held pursuant to a public notice published in accordance with Article 18-A of the General Municipal Law in the Ithaca Journal on March 2, 2013.

The purpose of this hearing is to afford the general public an opportunity to make statements and comments about the application of Hotel Ithaca, LLC for financial assistance from the Tompkins County IDA. The hearing will remain open for a period of not less than one hour or until all members of the public who are present at the hearing have been given an opportunity to make statements or comments on the application. This is not a question and answer session.

Comments presented at this hearing will be taken into consideration by the Tompkins County IDA as part of its consideration of the application.

I am going to ask the applicant to give a brief overview of the project and then start calling on speakers. If you wish to speak at today’s hearing, please sign the register.

In order to give everyone an ample opportunity to speak, I request that speakers keep their oral presentations to no more than three minutes. I will hold up this card to indicate when you have one

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minute left.

I will ask each speaker to come to the front of the room. Please state your name and address. If you are appearing as a representative of an organization or governmental entity, please identify the organization or entity and state its address. If you wish to submit a copy of your comments for the record, you may hand them to Ms. Arthur.

Finally, I want to remind you that the purpose of this hearing is to afford you an opportunity to make comments about Hotel Ithaca, LLC's application for financial assistance from the Tompkins County IDA. This is not a question and answer session.

I would now like to ask the applicant to give a brief presentation of the project and then I will begin calling speakers to approach the front of the room.

Further information about the project is available at the offices of the Tompkins County IDA during normal business hours.

Matt Jelazo from Urgo Developers gave a very brief overview of the project. The hotel will be a 10-story building with 159 rooms and 2400 s.f. of conference room space. The location is currently a vacant parking lot. This will be a Marriott Brand hotel. This is a very tight sight under .2 acres. The architecture has gone through all approvals and we will be incorporating local materials. Using water source heat pumps at this hotel 10% less energy during cooling and 26% less energy during the heating process. 94 tons of CO2 each year will be saved. A white roof will be used to reduce heat and cooling energy demand. The building envelope has been enhanced to reduce energy use. We expect 40,00 room nights when running. Housekeeping staff will be paid 156% of NYS minimum wages. We offer benefit packages to all full time employees and we are an equal opportunity employers.

Ms. Filiberto began to call speakers to address the Board.

1. Cathy Valentino – Represent the UAW and TCWC. She was pleased to hear about the 156% of NYS Minimum wage being paid to housekeepers and the benefits offered. She feels that good jobs and good housing helps create self-esteem and this is needed for our community. She would like any agreements for this project to have a signed agreement to honor the wages and benefits mentioned.
2. Nancy Bereano – Ithaca City Workforce Diversity. She has been a resident of Ithaca for 44 years and has been involved in many grass roots activities. Fairness and equity are at the center of all those activities. The IDA has an opportunity to further the mission of equity. A written agreement to ensure diversity of hiring should be built into any agreement – from front desk to housemaid. Those in the middle class will use this hotel; let us ensure that those working in the hotel can also enjoy its benefits.
3. Chris Hayes – Spoke about the importance of the living wage ordinances.
4. Pete Meyers – TCWC Coordinator. He spoke of the 156% of NYS minimum wages to be paid to housekeepers. How will this be attested to? How does health insurance work at this hotel? What is considered a full time employee? 30 hours? What percent will the employee pay for health benefits? He also spoke of the issue of using local labor to build the project. He

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would like to see 75 of workings on the project to be “local” from Tompkins County or the surrounding counties.

5. Herb Engman – Supervisor Town of Ithaca. Mr. Engman spoke of the Town of Ithaca Board and their discussion of this project. In general, the Town Board is skeptical of tax abatement programs. The area has seen an explosion of hotels recently. He was interested to see if the 20% ROI will be met or not. A living wage is important. He asked also that any tax abatement not involve the fire protection tax.
6. JoAnn Cornish – City of Ithaca. Ms. Cornish stated that the City of Ithaca has been working on this project since 2007. Environmental and site plan approvals have been done. This hotel will be an anchor for the commons. The sales and property taxes generated from this project will be a needed increase for the City. She also stated that with all the new construction and the commons reconstruction, there will be plenty of work for all laborers.
7. Chuck Smith – NE Regional Council of Carpenters Local 277. Mr. Smith stated that he was concerned with the Marriott project not paying standard wages and benefits to those who build it.
8. Mike Cannon – President of DIA. Mr. Cannon spoke to the use of a downtown density plan and keeping green space in the County. This project will do just that. He also acknowledged the increase cost of construction due to the site.
9. Rev. Rich Rose – 1st Baptist of Ithaca. He spoke to concerns about certified living wage for all workers. It is difficult to make a living and survive on less than a living wage. He also supports the use of local workers/contractors in building this project. He also supports diversity of hiring.
10. Gary Ferguson – DIA. Mr. Ferguson echoed the comments on how difficult the building will be on this particular site. He spoke of how the CIITAP policy promotes growth downtown and limits sprawl
11. Stacy Black – IBEW Local 241. He stated that he would like to see the use of local workers in the construction of this hotel. Local workers contribute by spending their money in town. Union works are also properly trained which limits accidents and also brings in a project on time and on budget.
12. Andrew Waye – Electrician IBEW Local 241. Mr. Waye spoke how the last few years have been very difficult in terms of finding work. Usually he has to drive to Syracuse or Binghamton for work. He spoke of the need of a living wage.
13. Mike Talarski – Business Manager of IBEW Local 241, Board members of TCAD and WIB. He encouraged the use of local area tax payers as laborers on this project. Currently he has 25% unemployment among his members. Not only is it expensive to build here, it is expensive to live here.
14. Kathy Luz- Herrera. TC Legislator and IBEW Local 241 member. Ms. Luz-Herrera stated that she is please to see the community coming together around this project. She would urge the use of local laborers who are paid a prevailing wage.
15. Jeff Furman. Mr. Furman spoke to the issues of use of local labor, paying a living wage to employees of the hotel, and dignity and diversity in hiring practices. He also urged getting all agreements in writing and in the PILOT agreement.
16. Theresa Alt – Leadership of Workers Center. Ms. Alt spoke for the need of a living wage, use of local labor and diversity of hiring. She also wondered about what other “low paying jobs” there would be besides housekeepers. She also stated that she feels the Marriott Hotel does not need financial help.
17. Jeri Galucci – U2O Understanding to Overcome. Ms. Galucci commented on making sure there is diversity of hiring at all levels.

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18. Mack Travis – Mr. Travis has been a local developer for over 40 years. He stated that each project is challenged. He spoke about his involvement with the development of the downtown density policies and the need for development downtown.
19. Jean McPheeters – President, Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce. Ms. McPheeters spoke on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce and the CVB. She supports this project as businesses want a strong downtown. She commented that Ithaca has the highest rate of occupancy due to market and demand. She discussed how increased room taxes and sales taxes generated by the hotel will lower property taxes for local residents. This hotel will also add to the conference/meeting space available downtown, of which there is great demand.
20. Pam Mackesey – TC Legislator. Ms. Mackesey spoke to the costs to local tax payers when there is not a living wage paid to all. More go on public assistance which increases the tax load. There is a delicate balance when building and also having equity for all.
21. Cynthia Brock – Alterperson, 1st Ward, City of Ithaca. Ms. Brock spoke about how the hotel would be an asset to the community, tourism, and local businesses downtown. She stated that we should consider ourselves partners as we all live in this community. Therefore as a partner we should get a return from the project. These returns should be a living wage for employees, a diverse employee population, and prevailing wages for builders of the project.

As there were no more speakers, Ms. Filiberto closed the public hearing at 5:40 PM