

**Tompkins County Development Corporation
Board of Directors Meeting Final Minutes
January 13, 2021 - 2:30 PM
Via Zoom Conference Call and LiveStream**

Present: Rich John, Martha Robertson, Mike Sigler, John Guttridge, Anne Koreman, Laura Lewis, Jeff Gorsky

Guests: Renu Ghandi, Hubert Lobo (DatapointLabs)

Staff Present: Heather McDaniel, Chuck Schwerin, Ina Arthur (IAED), Russ Gaenzle (Harris Beach), Rick Snyder (TC Finance)

CALL TO ORDER

Rich John called the meeting of the **Tompkins County Industrial Development Agency** to order at 2:35 pm. Jeff Gorsky was welcomed to the Board as the representative from the IAED Board of Directors. Mr. Gorsky is a Partner at Sciarabba Walker & Co.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

No comments from the public were submitted for this meeting.

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

John Guttridge brought up the topic of the sales tax exemption incentive and legality of the Board only exempting the State portion of the sales tax. Russ Gaenzle commented that this Board can take this action either on a case-by-case basis or the Board could create a policy addressing sales tax exemption.

John Guttridge asked that this topic be added to the agenda.

NEW BUSINESS

DatapointLabs, LLC – Application and Approval

DatapointLabs, LLC is a growing company that will be moving from a space at Langmuir labs to a larger space at 21 Dutch Mill Road in Lansing NY. The project is an interior conversion of 17,000 sf. of a 75,000 s.f. warehouse into a fully equipped laboratory. The project is an interior renovation of an existing facility and as such did not trigger any SEQR review or determination by the Town of Lansing. The IDA will make the determination that this is a Type II action and does not need any further environmental review.

The applicant is requesting a sales tax incentive only. The IDA administrative fee will be 1% of the estimated sales tax benefit and will be split between the IDA and the attorney. The Administrative Director requested waiving the \$1,000 application fee for this small project.

As the incentive amount will be less than \$100,000, there is no legal need to hold a public hearing before the Board makes a determination to approve the project.

Laura Lewis stated that she is pleased with the number of new permanent jobs that will be created by this project. She asked about the number of construction jobs and the estimated time for the construction work.

Heather McDaniel noted that the contractor is Edger Enterprises that is a local company.

Martha Robertson made a motion to approve the authorizing resolution for the DatapointLabs, LLC project. John Guttridge seconded the motion.

Additional details were requested about the new HVAC system and how it might fit into green construction practices. Mr. Lobo stated that the current building has 4 HVAC units on the roof. Adding more people and a testing lab with specific humidity requirements to the space requires the addition of an advanced HVAC system. This will be powered by natural gas. The needs of a testing lab are beyond what air-based heat pumps can provide.

Martha Robertson and Anne Koreman asked about the diversity of the current employees and encouraged looking at a diverse population when hiring.

John Guttridge asked about the possibility of exempting only the State portion of the sales tax. He understands that this is a smaller project and that this might not be the project to start with. But in the future perhaps this could be explored. (see addition to the agenda)

A roll call vote was taken on the motion. The motion was approved 7-0.

2021 Appointment of Administrative Director

Laura Lewis made a motion to appoint Heather McDaniel as the Administrative Director of the TCIDA for 2021. Anne Koreman seconded the motion. The motion was approved 7-0.

Emergency COVID 19 Childcare Grants – Approval

Chuck Schwerin introduced the four Emergency COVID 19 Childcare Grant applications. This is the third round of applicants. Awards are being requested for Butler Daycare, Lovely Day Ithaca, LLC, Group Family Day Care, and Varna Community Association, Inc. These four applicants will exhaust the \$100,000 that was set aside by the IDA for this purpose. The last applicant to come in was Lovely Day. The amount they requested, while under the \$10,000 limit, was cut as the total \$100,000 limit had been met. He asked that the Board consider increasing the amount for these grants by \$3,526 so that the full amount for Lovely Day could be considered.

John Guttridge made a motion to increase the total amount for the Emergency COVID 19 Childcare Grants by \$3,526. Jeff Gorsky seconded the motion. The motion was approved 7-0.

Jeff Gorsky asked about question 9 on the application. It requests CPA audited financial statements from the applicant if privately owned. This could be very costly. In cases where an organization is small and may not have audited financials, tax returns are generally accepted.

Martha Robertson stated that she is very pleased that the grant program has served 13 childcare providers. She would like to know how many children were impacted and would also encourage a press release on the IDA's efforts.

Anne Koreman made a motion to increase the recommended grant amount for Lovely Day Ithaca LLC from \$5,874 to \$9,400. Laura Lewis seconded the motion. The motion was approved 7-0.

Martha Robertson made a motion to approve the Emergency COVID 19 Childcare Grants to:

- **Butler Daycare**
- **Lovely Day Ithaca, LLC**
- **Group Family Day Care**
- **Varna Community Association, Inc.**

Laura Lewis seconded the motion. The motion was approved 7-0.

Sales Tax Exemption Incentive – Discussion

John Guttridge began the discussion stating he would like the Board to think about changing what is exempted due to the Pandemic and the need for local sales tax dollars. He feels that there is a need to limit what is exempted to the State portion and have future projects pay the local portion. Anne Koreman agreed.

Martha Robertson stated that she has mixed feelings. With large projects the amount of sales tax exempted is high. But for smaller projects limiting the exemption would be a big hit.

Heather McDaniel stated that changing the exemption to only the State portion would impact smaller projects. There is also the fact that other County IDAs do exempt both portions and we need these companies to be competitive. She would recommend not changing the exemption.

John Guttridge suggested setting a threshold so that larger projects only get the State portion exempted and smaller project would be both local and State.

Jeff Gorsky commented that changing the current exemption would create an uneven playing field and manufacturing projects could go somewhere else.

Russ Gaenzle commented that exempting only the State portion would create more administrative work. A payment in lieu of taxes agreement would have to be set up for the sales tax exemption.

Heather McDaniel indicated that the long-term economic gains from a company from increased jobs, property taxes, etc. are much larger than the short-term loss in sales tax.

Laura Lewis commented that is not inclined to support a change in the current exemption as she does not want to disincentives future growth. Looking to the long term she feels that the County will come out of this current downturn.

Anne Koreman asked the Board to consider making a change. Local sales tax can help to retain local jobs. She mentioned the County and City jobs that were furloughed.

CHAIRS REPORT – The Chair reported that the Governance Committee met to review the 2020 Board self-evaluation summary results. Overall, the results indicate that the Board feels the organization is meeting its goals and achieving goals. Some of the membership feels that the Board as a whole could do a better job. He stressed that individual members need to communicate and ask questions.

The summary results of the 2020 self evaluation are sent to the NYS Authority Budget Office and will also be posted on the website.

Anne Koreman was thanked for her service on the Board. She will be stepping aside so that a Labor Representative can be appointed the Board.

STAFF REPORT – The Administrative Director reported that Jeff Gorsky received a board orientation and that any future new appointees would as well.

Officers and committees will be appointed at the February 2021 meeting. Once the committee appointments are made, the Labor Committee will meet to continue discussion of the local labor policy.

The NYS Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) has informed the organization that they will be conducting a policy and procedures audit of the TCIDA. The audit will initially include projects that were active during 2020.

The annual 2020 audit of the TCIDA and TCDC will commence the first week of February.

The Housing Committee will be meeting on January 28, 2021.

The County Legislature will be appointing a labor representative to the Board. The Chair of the Legislature has indicated that the appointment recommendation will be coming from organized labor.

- Martha Robertson asked that the topic of adding two more members to the Board be added to a future agenda.
- Martha Robertson asked that the TCIDA/TCDC Application be reviewed and updated in regards of the use of the term “minority.”

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Martha Robertson asked if the December 9, 2020 minutes could be reworked to add clarity to the motions that outline changes to resolutions. These minutes will be brought back to the February 2021 Board meeting for approval.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 PM

Minutes were approved at February 10, 2021 meeting.