

Tompkins County Industrial Development Agency

Administration provided by Ithaca Area Economic Development

**TOMPKINS COUNTY INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
SPECIAL MEETING
• Wednesday, December 14, 2022 • 1:30 – 2:30 PM**

**Legislative Chamber
Governor Daniel D. Tompkins Building
121 E. Court Street, Ithaca NY**

THIS MEETING WILL BE LIVESTREAMED
Link to live stream channel: <https://tinyurl.com/weo3tkk>

AGENDA

1. **CALL TO ORDER**
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6. **ADJOURNMENT**

**Tompkins County Industrial Development Agency
Special Board of Directors Meeting DRAFT Minutes
October 12, 2022 – 1:30 – 2:30 PM
TC Legislative Chambers
121 E. Court Street, Ithaca NY 14850**

Present: Rich John, Faith Vavra, Jeff Gorsky, Shawna Black (remotely; non-voting), Mike Sigler, John Guttridge, Todd Bruer

Staff: Heather McDaniel, Ina Arthur (IAED), Stephen Maier, Russ Gaenzle-remotely (Harris Beach)

CALL TO ORDER

Rich John called meeting to order at 1:38 pm.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR - None

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA - None

BUSINESS

IDA Fund Balance Discussion

Board members reacted to the two memos in the agenda packet from 1) Harris Beach regarding the legality of fund balance use by the TCIDA and TCDC and 2) from IAED President, Heather McDaniel, on available fund balance after projected expenses, fund balance history and income projections, and priority funding opportunities.

Clarification was offered on how the IDA could pay for a study/feasibility study; the law indicates that the study would need to be tied to an existing IDA project. There would need to be a “nexus” to a project. Reacting to the three priority funding opportunities, it was suggested that the Ithaca Airport is central to the County’s transportation needs. Heather McDaniel stated that the airport could be tied to the Ithaca Convention Center which the IDA has delivered incentives to. The wayfinding signage project could also be tied to that project as it would serve visitors to the area.

John Guttridge stated that the lack of housing is creating a workforce problem. He asked if the IDA could purchase land to build housing? Could this be tied to the IDA’s purpose? Counsel stated that the GML stated the IDA can purchase land for commercial purposes. “Commercial” is not defined and the comptroller has stated that housing could fit within that definition. Counsel advised to keep good records as to what the funds would be used for.

The recent IDA COVID-19 Grants were asked about – this was a one-time use of funds allowed by NYS specifically for the purchase of PPE materials and services. This allowance has since sunset.

John Guttridge asked about the funds held by the TCDC and the totals that could be used.

Heather McDaniel stated that she looked at 2022 expenses and projected fee income for 2023 and contractual obligations and the slowdown in projects. She cannot comfortably project revenue in the future at the TCIDA and would recommend reserving funding to support the countywide economic development agency for at least two years.

John Guttridge clarified his question that he was asking about spending the total reserve funds in the TCDC so that the TCIDA funds be kept for stated obligations.

Heather McDaniel commented that while she does not see any bond issuance requests in the near future, the funds in the TCDC could be used with a little more flexibility.

Heather McDaniel commented that the IDA is an economic development engine and said that the IDA should think of supporting economic development. There are other IDA's that own land and business parks. With the announcement that Micron is coming to Clay, NY there are opportunities to capitalize on that with being ready for other companies and growth opportunities that will spin off. However, the TCIDA does not have a shovel ready business park while other IDAs in the area do. Tompkins County has a number of drawbacks (transportation, energy) and If we are serious about capturing the opportunities coming from Micron, we should identify about 40 acres of land that could be turned into a shovel ready business park.

John Guttridge stated that there is a large amount of office space available for these companies, but not being able to attract or find workforce causes some to move. Also, there is "no place" for people to live. He feels that housing should be a focus of the IDA.

Heather McDaniel commented that current zoning downtown does not allow for R&D facilities and small-scale manufacturing. However, Chainworks will be able to fill this need. A large interest there is to create a graduation space to house companies that are moving out of the area incubators, particularly high growth companies that could share resources with like companies.

Rich John asked about the IDA's ability to seek grants. Counsel was unsure if this is allowed. Heather McDaniel commented that IAED which is a 501c6 and the TCAD Foundation which is a 501c3 could be grant recipients.

Mike Sigler asked about the acreage at Chainworks – there are about 100 acres available. He commented that it fits what the current conversation is talking about. Could the TCIDA become a part owner? Carving out a tech transfer space there is opportunity for this.

Heather McDaniel stated there already is a development group partnering with David Lubin. They are planning to renovate Building 24 after the initial demolition stage. This building would work well for the tech graduation space.

John Guttridge talked about using fund balance to leverage grants to help with affordable housing. This serves two purposes. We could make land available at a lower cost to help developers and this could also generate deal flow.

Jeff Gorsky asked about how the fund balance could be leveraged for building housing? John Guttridge stated that the IDA could buy land and prepare the infrastructure that then could be used by developers to build housing. Essentially creating opportunity for developers to come into the area. The IDA would have to seek grant money to buy the land.

Rich John stated that the Community Housing Fund and INHS are doing this already and the IDA has supported a number of housing projects. He asked if other members feel housing is the what the IDA should support.

Todd Bruer stated that there are transportation and energy issues – he suggested focusing on bolstering infrastructure.

Faith Vavra stated that money coming from the federal government will be significant and we should prepare for this opportunity. The federal money is focused on electrification and housing – leveraging the money is a really good idea if we don't have to spend it right away.

Jeff Gorsky reiterated that the federal infrastructure bill will bring funds to support infrastructure that should be a focus. He also stated that focusing on supporting development of Chainworks would help in the ability to attract and retain high tech businesses. In terms of housing, he agrees with Rich John that there are a number of other organizations that are doing well in this area.

Mike Sigler commented on the need for housing for all the Micron employees coming. Employees need housing. He asked about property in the City that could be available for housing opportunities.

Shawna Black stated that housing will always be an issue and the small fund balance amount under discussion would not move the needle much. Childcare is a larger issue especially for those who are moving into the area who need childcare. She would advocate using the funds to support this.

Rich John stated based on the memo there is about \$1M to be used in the fund balance – is it the sense of the board that we want to spend the money? Todd Bruer stated yes. John Guttridge stated that there should be a strategic vision developed to know how we could use the money. Faith Vavra agreed. Jeff Gorsky agreed that funds should be spent, and he agreed that it should be strategic as well as making sure there is funding to support the economic development organization in the County. He stated that the wayfinding project would be good to support - \$100,000 would go a long way. Mike Sigler stated that money that is not used is not doing any good. Shawna Black agreed that the money should be spent.

Heather McDaniel commented that, in her capacity as an economic development professional, she suggested the airport study, the way finding project, and the tech graduation space after reviewing the county's comprehensive plan and recovery strategy. Supporting these projects would go a long way in leveraging other funding available.

Rich John asked do we want to be strategic by developing a vision first or do we want to be opportunistic and support initiatives like the wayfinding project as they come up? Mike Sigler stated that the County should pay for the wayfinding and airport study.

Rich John commented that there is a great opportunity in Chainworks and that the IDA should focus on supporting this. John Guttridge stated that the budget for developing this project will make the IDA's fund balance pale in comparison. Jeff Gorsky stated that perhaps focusing on a smaller part of the Chainworks development would be more strategic. He feels the County should pay for the airport study. He would support the \$100,000 for the wayfinding project.

John Guttridge stated that being opportunistic at the right level is good. He would advocate continuing this discussion. He would like to have the IDA develop a plan.

It was agreed that the IDA Board would meet an hour prior to the next scheduled meeting to continue this discussion.

Mike Sigler commented that this area needs a theme. Perhaps that theme would be Cornell University.

The meeting adjourned at 2:26 pm.

**Tompkins County Industrial Development Agency
Special Board of Directors Meeting DRAFT Minutes
November 9, 2022 – 1:30 – 2:30 PM
TC Legislative Chambers
121 E. Court Street, Ithaca NY 14850**

Present: Rich John, Faith Vavra, Jeff Gorsky, Shawna Black, John Guttridge, Todd Bruer

Staff: Heather McDaniel, Ina Arthur (IAED), Russ Gaenzle-remotely (Harris Beach)

CALL TO ORDER - Rich John called meeting to order at 1:42 pm.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR - None

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA - None

BUSINESS

IDA Fund Balance Discussion

Purpose of the meeting is to continue the IDA/LDC's fund balance discussion. The Tompkins County Economic Development Strategy and the Tompkins County Recovery Strategy were shared with board members electronically to demonstrate that the previously proposed spending recommendations are aligned with the existing strategies. This was in response to comments that spending decisions were being made in a vacuum.

Rich John commented that in these documents there are direct references to the airport. Jeff Gorsky asked if the County was giving support the airport and its feasibility study. Shawna Black stated that the County has put \$200,000 of support into its budget for the airport study. The assumption is that they airport will come forth with a strategic plan and a request for additional support in order to get through the next few years.

The sense of this board is that there is not much interest in this particular ask from the airport especially since the County has it in its budget. John Guttridge stated that there might be more interest in leveraging other infrastructure projects in the future.

Shawna Black asked if money could be put into a contingency fund to fund outcomes identified by the study.

Jeff Gorsky asked about the total amount under discussion. The total amount of \$700,000 under discussion is pulled from both the TCIDA and TCDC fund balances.

\$100,000 – Wayfinding Project Support
\$100,000 – Airport Feasibility Study
\$500,000 – Southworks Technology Cluster

John Guttridge stated that he thinks there are other things to consider outside of the three recommendations. In fact he is going to ask for an executive session to discuss a possible real estate purchase. It was confirmed that this is a topic that could be discussed in executive session.

John Guttridge stated that he has discussed the wayfinding project with the City and Downtown Ithaca Alliance. Support for this is growing as the County, City and DIA are lending funding towards this project. He would support allocating funding for this. He would like to define what specifically the IDA/LDC fund balance would be

supporting. If support is tied to a specific project such as the conference center, the fund balance could pay for a specific contract for consulting fees. As long as the expenditure is by contract, the funds can be spent in support of the wayfinding project.

John Guttridge made a motion to allocate \$100,000 of the fund balance toward support of the Wayfinding Project. Shawna Black seconded the motion.

Rich John asked if \$100,000 is the correct number. Heather McDaniel stated that she arrived at the amount after discussions with the Chamber of Commerce which is the lead agency on this project. Russ Gaenzle stated that any contract will be reviewed by counsel.

Rich John commented that the fact the project has been a priority for the past ten years yet has not moved forward shows that it really hasn't been a priority. Also, there are cost overruns and thus funding will cover a smaller part of the project. Will the funding do what we want and how much is the gap to fill the whole project? Would there be a further plan?

Heather McDaniel stated that this has been a priority in economic development and the strategic tourism board for the last few years. All the professional staff feel it is critical. Placemaking is what makes visitors and residents feel welcome. It contributes to quality of life and differentiates communities. Partners have tried unsuccessfully to fund this project several times. It has recently gained momentum and there are other secured funding sources from the Strategic Tourism Planning Board and the City of Ithaca that could finally move this forward.

Jeff Gorsky stated that he feels comfortable that there are plans in place and would advocate for moving forward with allocating the funds.

Shawna Black stated her support as well knowing that his will help support the County's tourism efforts.

Faith Vavra indicated that connectivity is important.

Rich John stated that he is willing to support this as well. He would like to see the overall budget and what support is being made and how much.

While agreeing that seeing the reports would be good, John Guttridge asked to call the vote.

The motion was approved 6-0.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

John Guttridge made a motion to take the meeting into executive session to discuss the possible acquisition of real estate. Jeff Gorsky seconded the motion. The motion was approved 6-0.

Todd Bruer made a motion to bring the meeting out of executive session. Shawna Black seconded the motion. The motion was approved 6-0.

The meeting adjourned at 2:31 pm.