

**Tompkins County Industrial Development Agency
Board of Directors Meeting Final Minutes
December 13, 2023 2:00 – 4:00 PM
TC Legislative Chambers
121 E. Court Street
Ithaca NY 14850**

Present: Rich John, Todd Bruer, Jeff Gorsky, Anne Koreman, Ducson Nguyen, Deborah Dawson, John Guttridge

Staff: Heather McDaniel, Kellea Bauda, Ina Arthur (IAED), Stephen Maier, Russ Gaenzle (remote) (Harris Beach, PLLC)

Guests: Ryan McCune (Nexamp)

CALL TO ORDER

Rich John called meeting to order at 2:00 pm.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Theresa Alt – 206 Eddy Street

Theresa Alt addressed the “IDA” work plan for next year. The plan mentions 160 new housing units 37 of which are affordable. She suspects the number is from affordable units that will be built at Southworks. 37 affordable housing units is pathetically little. She thinks the number comes from Harold’s Square and Astari’s lawsuit. The housing units should be built sooner rather than later. People need jobs. She challenges the board to create the jobs that people need in order to live in downtown Ithaca.

Peter Wissoker – City of Ithaca (read by Rich John)

My apologies for not being there in person. I have a meeting that conflicts with this one. Please read my comments aloud, in case members of the board haven’t had a chance to peruse them.

Carrowmoor Solar

Needless to say, I’m glad to see a solar project come before you, especially one that pays the prevailing wage and intends to hire 75% local labor. Ideally, when Nexamp hires consultants or contractors to service the site once it’s up and running, they will be local as well. That might be something you could request.

Given the county’s desire to increase the number of people employed in green industries, it’s a shame that the company isn’t planning on working with firms that offer a certified apprentice program. It is a perfect opportunity to give some hands-on experience to younger people who want to make the transition to green jobs.

Nexamp is requesting a PILOT as well a sales tax benefit of \$432,964 (for a \$11,831,794.60 project). The sales tax benefit comprises just 3.66% of the total cost of the project. And while it is a relatively small part of the project’s total cost, it is an amount that would be much more meaningful to our local communities, particularly at a time when the Town of Ithaca has just lost Cornell funding for its contribution to the City of Ithaca Fire Department,

and, as always, the School District and the County are short of money—not to mention the lack of funds for the new EMT program.

The application notes, “Nexamp is the largest asset holder of Community Solar projects in NYS.” But what it doesn’t say is that Nexamp is a subsidiary of Mitsubishi (<https://www.mitsubishicorp.com/jp/en/bg/power-solution-group/project/nexamp/>). In other words, it has more than sufficient access to capital and it doesn’t need the tax break. Honestly, I’m fine with the PILOT, but I ask you to reject their request regarding sales taxes. And let’s not forget they already have a NYSERDA grant worth almost \$1.25 million. The company has enough invested in the project that they are not going to walk away over such a small piece of the total costs. Please say no to their request for a break on the sales taxes.

IAED Workplan

Overall, the IAED workplan looks great. Congratulations on doing a really good job. The focused attention to job creation and industry attraction is admirable.

By now, you won’t be surprised that I have concerns about the real estate section. Maybe it’s time to remove “Real Estate Development” from the agency’s core mission, or replace it with “Supporting the development of middle- and low-income housing.” Similarly, I would ask that on page 6, in the community benefits section, you substitute “800 New Housing Units that are affordable to households earning less than \$100,000 a year,” or something along those lines for “800 New Housing Units.” The agency must get out of the market-rate housing business, and this is the time to do it. We’ve already seen that adding more top-of-the-market apartments has not lowered the rents in the county. The top-down approach doesn’t work. Please leave it in the past and move on.

Finally, by any chance did you pursue my suggestion regarding Conifer’s parent company? As a reminder, I urged you to insist that half the tax break for Conifer’s senior housing development be contingent on a matching investment from their parent company which would be used to remodel the apartments there. I assume the idea went nowhere beyond the walls of Ithaca Town Hall and the minutes of the public hearing. But I urge you to leverage requests for tax breaks in cases like this. It can help someone like our local Conifer apartment management gain increased financial support from their parent company. It would be a way to serve both the local division of national or international companies and the residents of our community.

Thank you for your time. As always, I’m available to discuss any of these issues. You can reach me at wissoker@lightlink.com.

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA – None

BUSINESS

Carrowmoor Solar, LLC – Application

Heather McDaniel introduced the Carrowmoor Solar application. This is a proposed 5MWac community solar energy facility to be constructed for the purpose of generating renewable energy for consumption by NYSEG and its customers in the area. The proposed facility is located at 1340 Mecklenburg Road in the Town of Ithaca. The proposed incentives is consistent with the Off-Site Commercial Solar Policy of the IDA. A twenty-five-year PILOT with a payment of \$4,200 per megawatt (AC) in year one with a 2% annual increase each year. The administrative fee for solar projects is ½ % of project costs. The Town of Ithaca Supervisor has submitted a letter in support of this request.

Ryan McCune of Nexamp spoke to the Board. The project is the largest and fourth project Nexamp has in Tompkins County. Nexamp intends to own and operate this project.

John Guttridge made a motion to approve the application and send it to a public hearing. Todd Bruer seconded the motion. The motion was approved 7-0.

IAED 2024 Work Plan & 5-Year Strategy – Presentation

Heather McDaniel presented an overview of IAED’s 2024 Work Plan and 5-year strategy.

TCIDA/IAED 2024 Memorandum of Understanding – Approval

John Guttridge stated that he would like to table the discussion until further review of the agreement by a subcommittee of the board. He stated that the agreement is for a large sum of money and this it would be the board’s fiduciary duty to take a closer look at it before approving it.

Other board members were open to a review of the agreement but did not feel that doing so at the “eleventh hour” was good practice. It was suggested that the 2024 MOU be approved, and then future agreements be reviewed in the new year. The board was reminded that a request to review had been made a few meetings ago.

It was agreed upon to have the executive committee of the IDA meet before the end of the year to review the memorandum of understanding and then bring it back to the board for approval at the January 10, 2024 meeting.

Annual Board Self Evaluation

Ina Arthur reminded the Board of the required annual self-evaluation and asked that the forms be returned to her before the end of the year.

CHAIRS REPORT

Rich John commented that the Southworks project will be coming to the IDA in the new year and that he is looking forward to hearing more of the overall project goals.

John Guttridge made a motion to take the meeting into executive session after business is concluded in order to discuss contract negotiations. Anne Koreman seconded the motion. The motion was approved 7-0.

STAFF REPORT

Heather McDaniel reported that the Marketview Apartments held an open house. She also reported that she presented to the Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce housing task force on TCIDA housing incentives. She also thanked Ina Arthur for her work on getting out the annual audit project request forms.

John Guttridge asked for an update on the County Housing Development Fund payments at a future meeting.

MINUTES

Deborah Dawson made a motion to approve the Board minutes from the November 8, 2023 meeting. Todd Bruer seconded the motion. The motion as approved 7-0.

The meeting was recessed in order to consider the TCDC Agenda and then the meeting was resumed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The meeting went into executive session upon the motion that was made earlier. Rich John stated that he did not anticipate the board taking any action after coming out of executive session.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 pm.

Minutes were approved January 10, 2024.