Shared Services Under Review

By Emily Thomas

Herb Engman suggested a different approach. “At some point you need to have a sagebrush rebellion against stupid state mandates,” he said. However, he noted that if the Ithaca City School District significant-ly cuts its tax cap it will do if the proposed $113 million budget is approved this year—it will be difficult for neighboring and overlapping tax districts to show a 1 percent reduction.

“I’d rather just say let’s forget the whole thing and say Ithaca is not going to play their game,” Engman said.

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TCAD Releases Power Plant Study

By Nick Babel

A study commissioned by Tompkins County Area Development (TCAD) to calculate the economic impact on New York State if the Cayuga Operating Company LLC (COC) power plant in Lansing is repowered from coal to natural gas shows that such a move would result in more jobs and additional tax revenue.

Among the key findings in the study, conducted by Camoin Associates, are that the construction phase of the repowering project would result in 46 new direct “construction job-years” generating $5.3 million in new direct earnings on-site and an additional $1.5 million in indirect earnings for New York State.

Construction would result in $16.4 million in new sales in New York State, including $4.7 million in materials purchases. After construction, 116 new jobs would be created, including 30 direct jobs at the site, the report states.

Economic impact is one of the major reasons a successful fundraising campaign by the Cayuga Service Commission (PSC) will consider as they decide the future of the plant. The major assumption of the study is that if COC is not repowered, it would be decommissioned and the closure would result in the loss of all power plant jobs.

“Only Lovers Left Alive” is a bloody shame

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United Way celebrates a successful fundraising campaign

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“Some 2,500 yellow rubber ducks began their perilous journey down Cascadilla Creek in Ithaca at 2 p.m. on April 27. Launched by staff from Cooperative Extension, the ducks were part of the 14th annual 4-H Duck Race and Color Splash Run, a fundraiser for 4-H. The first 43 ducks that made it to the finish line near Cooperative Extension at Willow Avenue and Route 13 netted generous prices (donated by area businesses) for their race sponsors.”

TCAD.org/?page_id=309.

“The repowering project will require construction and renovation of energy service for NYSEG customers one of two things under the second option, NYSEG could enter into an 18-month construction period, installation of a natural gas pipeline, plant upgrades, replacing burners on the boilers and installing new control systems.”

Under the second option, NYSEG would upgrade its transmission lines throughout the region and obtain energy from outside the state. This project will require construction and material purchases at the site and new transmission lines.

If the repowering option is approved by the PSC, NYSEG and COC would likely enter into a shared services agreement under which NYSEG will pay for the repowering project and pay an annual fee to COC.”

The TCAD report describes both proposals and focuses on economic impacts. The complete study can be found on TCAD’s website http://www.tcad.org/?page_id=309.

The Tompkins County Council of Governments (TCCOG) addressed the shared services study required by the state as yet another component to the cable committee and an update from the Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC) for the EPA.

TCCOG member and Tompkins County Legislature Chairman Michael Lane explained that, in the first year of the state-mandated tax freeze, local governments will be allowed to stay within the state’s property tax cap, with residents of the areas eligible for a small rebate from the state. For the second year of the tax freeze, the rebate requirements are more stringent.

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Deciding when to invest in emerging technology is difficult, but by combining their resources, investing in a fleet of electric vehicles and charging stations becomes feasible for the city and town. A change in the law now allows municipalities to piggyback on each other’s bids, making it possible to buy in bulk at a discount. As for energy use in buildings, Goldsmith suggests that energy audits, followed by implementation of audit suggestions, will play a big part in reducing energy use. “Also, looking at the possibility of more advanced building codes could be another strategy,” he says.

“Where is our energy coming from?” asks Goldsmith. “Is it from fossil fuels? Is it from renewables? The city already sources 100 percent of its energy from renewable sources via renewable-energy credits, and the town is looking into the best way to also do this. This is a good, short-term solution until we can get more renewables actually installed.”

As for installing renewables, Goldsmith notes that the Solar Tompkins project (www.solar-tompkins.org) helps businesses and individuals take advantage of bulk purchasing of solar panels, coordinated contracts with installers and a streamlined application and funding process to purchase and install panels.

Both the town and city may add even more momentum to the Solar Tompkins program. Goldsmith is going to set up tours of homes with solar panels. “We’re trying to support the Solar Tompkins program as much as we can to boost the solar market,” he says.

The Town of Ithaca will release its Comprehensive Plan soon, says Goldsmith, and sustainability is a key component. There is some great stuff around land-use planning, which will help on the transportation side, making things denser so there are more people to bike or walk. The city is also making sustainability a key theme in their plan,” he says.

“We really have top-down support from the town and the city. I’ll be working out of the mayor’s office and the supervisor’s office, which is important for two reasons. One is that it shows people that it is important to the municipality. The other is that it reflects the cross-departmental nature of it. We’re trying to institutionalize sustainability, to make it a part of the organization,” Goldsmith says.

According to Engman, “Both the city and the town have their energy-management plans for internal operations, the city has already completed their community-wide energy action plan and the town is very close to being finished. So we know that within a few months of the beginning of this year we would have to start the implementation stage of those plans.

“Another reality, we’ve changed Nick’s position from a sustainability planner to a sustainability manager. It’s a little tough to update on this project, sign up for the monthly electronic Ithaca Sustainability Newsletter at http://tinyurl.com/k4lhxcs. For more information on sustainability, contact Nick Goldman at ngoldsmith@town.ithaca.ny.us, or call 273-1721, ext.136, or 917-276-1683.