

**Geneva Industrial Development Agency
Geneva City Hall – Second Floor Teams Room
And via Zoom livestreamed to GIDA’s YouTube Page
Friday, August 15, 2025 – 3:30pm
Meeting Minutes**

In Attendance:

Anne Nenneau, Chair
Lowell Dewey
Josh Kayn
Catherine Price – via Zoom
Irene Rodriguez
Jan Regan

Others Present:

Wendy Marsh

Necessarily Absent:

RJ Passalacqua

Meeting Called to Order

Chair Nenneau called the meeting to order at 3:30pm

Chair Nenneau read the IDA’s Mission Statement to open the meeting.

Review of GEDC Next Steps

City Manager Hendrix shared that she is looking for the direction from this board, how the IDA wants to proceed with the GEDC property, recalling that the board has an agreement to review from current management company. Moving forward the choices for the property include staying the same, implementing the strategy described by Tom Mancuso, or to sell the GEDC.

Mr. Dewey shared that he feels strongly that the IDA can’t abandon the building, walking away from a 100,000 square foot structure is a mistake, and he fears it will deteriorate. He explained that the property needs a little bit more income. He believes that a small rent increase from the City can help by injecting funds to improve two or three spaces. He then recements making those spaces showcase spaces. He recalled a woman from Cornell that he had a conversation with. She had toured the building looking for space, and her take away was that it’s a mess, and she was looking for clean space. Mr. Dewey envisions improving the entrance, parking, adding interesting signage, and improving 2-3 spaces to show as “typical” spaces. Once those spaces are leased their rent would help fund future improvements. He doesn’t see this as a huge investment, rather a short-term investment. He admits that it would be a lot of work to manage, and that he could help on some level since he’s partially retired.

Chair Nenneau said that David West did a good job, and spent time at the property, going above and beyond his job description. She elaborated on the Cornell offshoot’s interest, they were looking for a clean office space, and they had equipment needed to be off loaded from a truck. Logistically that was difficult, as there wasn’t convenient

access. She admitted that the carpet is old needs cleaning, and believes that some quick clean up would make a big difference. Webster's lack of effort discussed. Comptroller Blowers wondered if there is a more efficient, less expensive way to do what the IDA is doing now. Would a different model of management work better? Chair Nenneau believes that someone local, and present would be better for the property overall. She went on to described a few buildings in Rochester, old factories divided up into smaller office spaces or cubicles, that are cleaned up, occupied, and successful. She went on to describe how to make small improvements over time. She also raised concern that if the IDA doesn't make improvements, the building will crumble, as Building C already is.

City Manager Hendrix encouraged the board to look at entire building's rent, not just the rent for the City's DPW space. Chair Nenneau noted trouble charging more for rent when the space is in the condition it's in. Comptroller Blowers suggested using funds that the IDA and GEDC do have to build the place back up. Chair Nenneau believes that PILOT's would support this work, and allow IDA the investment in the GEDC. She described some of the investments that would benefit the building including dividing up larger spaces, adding unit access from the outside by adding man doors like the LNB space has. She then noted that LNB doesn't work in that space, they just dump furniture there. She suggested moving LNB to an area that's less desirable if an outside door is added, to free up that more desirable space. Comptroller Blowers agreed, and supports working with tenants to move to better suited space, and charging lower rent for less desirable spaces. Chair Nenneau stressed that an onsite invested manager would have those conversations, negotiate better use of space, and clean them up as they go.

Ms. Rodriguez summarized main take aways to include focusing on a mission driven building, staying focused there as the best starting point. She noted that this group seems to want an incubator, so that's been decided. She recalled Tom Mancuso advising that management is more important than money, and wondered what does that look like for this property. City Manager Hendrix agreed that the mission piece is important to think about. She noted that the GEDC is an aging building with multiple tenants paying cheap rent for their space, not incubating businesses, as most tenants are using their units as storage space...Webster even has it advertised as such. She sees the need to align here. Ms. Price expressed agreement with everybody, especially Mr. Dewey.

Ms. Rodriguez asked Ms. Price, with her BID experience, what is the demand is for space in the City? Ms. Price explained that kitchens with industrial equipment and a hood and some storage is in high demand. She sees almost all property search being for food service based businesses. Ms. Rodriguez wondered what type of vacant office space exists downtown? Ms. Price confirmed that the majority vacant space exists because there is a landlord that doesn't want to rent. Vacancies sit for 3-6 months; she doesn't see a huge vacancy issue aside from larger spaces like former Family Dollar. Ms. Regan wondered if a tour of the space will be arranged. She wondered with need for housing, and seeing trends, that it is cool to turn old factories into housing. She shared some examples of buildings in Summerville Massachusetts that have been converted into art studios and living units. City Manager Hendrix explained the challenges of converting this property to residential housing, as the windows don't have

fire egress. Ms. Rodriguez recalled architects and engineers advising that housing would likely never be allowable on that site period, due to environmental concerns. Chair Nenneau shared that and David West took Home Leasing through the GEDC, they know what they're doing, and they didn't see it. What they did see was fire access and environmental issues. C&S suggestions around grants for solar and heating systems was discussed.

Mr. Kayn, as a newer board member, wondered what the IDA has done in the past. He wondered if the board has been approached by people to buy the property. City Manager Hendrix shared that there have been people willing to buy for a dollar, or have the IDA demolish the building and then they will pay a dollar. Chair Nenneau explained that if the IDA sold the building for \$1, the IDA would eat our mortgage. She recalled Tom Mancuso saying if you give the building away you won't get the end result you're looking for; they will shortchange it along the way, give up and, abandon it four years later with nothing done to it.

Mr. Kayn referenced rents with the City, which are very favorable rate long term lease and wondered what the temperature of the City is for paying more. City Manager Hendrix explained that the space is not the most ideal for city to utilize, and wondered if it makes sense long term to utilize that space closer to market rate. She explained that the City is considering a DPW Building Needs Study, seeking grant funding down the road, and relocating since DPW is currently operating out of scattered spaces. She explained that it makes sense to consolidate, or co locate with another municipality. She also reminded the board that the City does pay utilities, repairs, and maintenance the space they lease.

Mr. Kayn agreed that it make sense for the board to invest in a structure onsite, mitigate issues making it less desirable, get a grant writer to fund changes to make it work for the city. Any improvements cost money, and will need grant funding to make improvements. He wondered if the IDA should hire grant writer, recalling Tom Mancuso's comments around keeping the building, requiring heavy financial commitment to it for about three years to get back to basics.

Chair Nenneau recalled the C&S for engineering study, noting that the firm was engaged in part for grant writing department, but unfortunately, didn't get to the point where we had enough information to give to grant writers. The study was a broad brush for \$15,000. City Manager Hendrix advised that if the board doesn't have a vision for the space they won't get a grant. She recommended going back to vision, why does the space exist? Is it even the best use having the highway facility there? Is the best use for incubator center benefiting that space for other startups. Mr. Dewey envisions creating a DPW facility on the property that everyone wants go to work at, highlighting easy parking access. City Manager Hendrix explained that the GEDC doesn't have enough space there for all of the City's DPW equipment, which is getting bigger.

Mr. Kayn wondered what if there should be a conversation about work relationship with City/IDA to engage a grant writer? Noting that it makes sense for the City to rent space from organization that betters the City, and in turn making the space more attractive with those funds, in turn serving business incubation. City Manager Hendrix wondered if the vision for the building is an incubator or a DPW facility.

Chair Nenneau wondered what might happen when Building C comes down, will the walls need to be stabilized, and if that space could be restructured to be more desirable

for the city. She sees this as a great short term solution, but wondered if that's what the board really wants. She agrees that the concept of why the IDA has the building is right, and admitted that the building isn't being used in that manner. City Manager Hendrix recommended looking at the vision for entire property space, not just the physical building. She referenced a building in Batavia with a concert venue outside, and pointed out that passenger trains travel on the tracks along the building more frequently now. Mr. Kayn noted that electricity is hard to come by now, not for lack of power but inability to get power to new building sites, which will incentivize this site for certain businesses. Chair Nenneau agreed that the building is marketable, and was home to a bitcoin mining at one point. At that time NYSEG upgraded capacity to the facility, which is a marketable commodity now, she sees an opportunity here, explaining that the IDA should be selling that capacity to a tenant. She went on to note that the building has water and sewer, making developing anything on the site more turn key, suggesting that this is an asset available to connect to. Mr. Kayn suggested marketing the building with that asset in mind if it's there. Chair Nenneau agreed, noting that the three phase electricity makes it very marketable, and can be part of the mission, marketing manufacturing, not a warehouse, not jobs. Mr. Kayn suggested marketing to industries that need that capacity the IDA can readily identify what's there. Chair Nenneau stressed that that's why the IDA needs an onsite manager there; Webster has no incentive, and is not doing that, however they might if they owned the building. She went on to note that there would be plenty of money to hire an onsite manager if the IDA wasn't paying Webster \$200k annually to manage the property. Comptroller Blowers agreed, hiring a person is \$100,000, and now you have \$110,000 for maintenance and marketing in addition to an onsite manager.

Executive Session

Mr. Kayn made a motion to enter into executive session at 4:21pm to discuss matters leading to the appointment, employment, promotion, demotion, discipline, suspension, dismissal or removal of a particular corporation; seconded by Mr. Dewey, motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Dewey made a motion to exit executive session at 4:54pm, seconded by Ms. Rodriguez; motion carried unanimously.

Adjournment

Mr. Kayn made a motion to adjourn at 4:55pm, seconded by Mr. Passalacqua; motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole Tillotson
Geneva City Clerk