

Tiny Town, uSA – On Feb. 19, 2014, without public foreknowledge, the Common Council voted 8-1 to approve an addition \$3.8 million toward Phase 3 of the the Ithaca Commons Reconstruction project. The resolution was introduced on the floor the evening of Feb. 19 and the public learned about it after the fact. The council can introduce any number of things at the last minute in a public meeting. But officials, certainly the Mayor, certainly key players with the Board of Public Works and various subcommittees, knew that the city was going to pony-up more money for the Commons project. This item ought to have been included in the public agenda. It is the opinion of the editorial staff at tinytowntimes.com., such as it is these days (me, Chad, some times Belinda Cho, C. Pembroke Handy when he's healthy, which is hardly ever any more, and others), that when the city decides to add another chunk of taxpayer's money to the rolls, the public should know what the heck is going on before *not after*. That's all. Even if Ithaca were flush, which it most certainly is not, it is only ethical to give public notice. That this passed with only one council person expressing concern about the lack of public notice makes us wonder if there isn't a bit of GroupThink going on inside City Hall these days. Reminder: This is not about personalities. There is no substantive media coverage of city hall in real-time and we live in an age of email reportage. People who speak out in public meetings more than once or twice, tend to get marginalized.

With that, the Amendment to Capital Project 724, still strangely absent from the City of Ithaca's website, unless we're completely mistaken. And if we are, here it is anyway:

Amendment to Capital Project 724 -- Ithaca Commons Repair and Upgrade Project

- Resolution

WHEREAS, in 2007, the Common Council authorized, as a part of the 2008 capital budget, \$250,000 to begin preliminary design on repairs and upgrades to the Ithaca Commons, and Capital project 724, Ithaca Commons Design and Construction, was established, and

WHEREAS, in June of 2009, the City hired Sasaki Associates, a Boston based planning, design, and architectural firm, to design upgrades and repairs for the Commons, and

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Written by Administrator

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WHEREAS, after extensive analysis it was determined that due to the necessary repairs to the surfaces and the underground utilities the entire Commons would need to be reconstructed, and

WHEREAS, in October of 2010, the Common Council authorized, as part of the 2011 capital budget an amendment to capital project 724, to add an additional \$800,000 to complete the full design and preparation of construction drawings for the full redesign of the Commons, and

WHEREAS, in March of 2012, the Common Council passed a resolution authorizing staff to apply for a federal grant to fund the reconstruction of the Commons and confirmed its intent to commit the City to matching funds of \$3,500,000 towards this project, and

WHEREAS, in July of 2012, the City was notified that the US Federal Transit Administration(FTA) was awarding the City a \$4,500,000 grant towards the reconstruction of the Ithaca Commons, in addition Tomkins County has indicated that the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) will contribute an additional \$562,500 for a total of \$5,062,500, and

WHEREAS, on July 9, 2012 the Downtown Ithaca Alliance (DIA) passed a resolution pledging to increase their BID assessment in order to contribute an additional \$500,000 to be used for the reconstruction of the Commons, and

WHEREAS, in November of 2012, Common Council authorized, as part of the 2013 capital budget, an amendment to capital project 724 to cover the upfront costs of the reconstruction, including the \$3,500,000 that the Common Council had pledged to commit to this project and the \$5,000,000 in funds to be reimbursed by the FTA and the NYSDOT at the completion of the project, and the \$500,000 in funds pledged by the DIA, and

WHEREAS, in November of 2012, Common Council also authorized, as part of the 2013 Water Fund capital project 524 in the amount of \$573,000 and capital project 625 in the amount of \$860,000 from the City Sewer Fund as a part of this project, and

WHEREAS, in July of 2012, the City submitted a Consolidated Funding Application to the New

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York State Southern Tier Regional Council for additional funding assistance for the reconstruction of the Commons, and in December was notified that they would be receiving \$1,800,000, in reimbursable funds to be used towards the reconstruction of the Commons, and

WHEREAS, on February 6, 2014, the City received one bid on the general construction contract for the Commons with a cost that was significantly higher than the budget estimates that were prepared by the City's design firm, and

WHEREAS, if the City chooses to execute most of the contract deducts, which include, the removal of the fountain, the two gateway structures, a reduction in the amount of structural soil, a substitution of concrete pavers in place of granite pavers, the removal of movable planters, the substitution of the semi-movable chairs with movable chairs, and the removal of the play structure, the cost will still exceed the budget by nearly \$2,000,000, and

WHEREAS, in order to award the general construction contract, the City must elect to execute all of the bid deducts and must also amend capital project 724, by adding an additional \$3,800,000, to include the upfront cost of the CFA funds, and the \$2,000,000, in additional expenses, and

WHEREAS, once the City awards a contract for the general construction there may be an opportunity to negotiate some additional savings for the project in order to recoup the additional expenses or to reincorporate some of the removed elements, and

WHEREAS, in order to complete construction in 2014, the contractor must be given notice to proceed by March 7, 2014, and therefore now be it

RESOLVED, that the Common Council approves an addition to Capital Project 724 in an amount not to exceed \$3,800,000, for a total authorization of \$13,850,000, and be it

RESOLVED, that funds necessary for said project amendment shall be derived from the issuance of Serial Bonds with a later State Aid reimbursement of \$1,800,000 from Consolidated Funding to New York State Southern Tier Regional Council, and be it

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RESOLVED, that the Common Council instructs the Mayor and City staff to pursue all available funding options in order to reduce the City's share of the Commons Reconstruction Project, and be it further resolved,

RESOLVED, that the Common Council instructs the Mayor and appropriate staff to negotiate further cost savings with the selected contractor in order to lower the City's financial share of the Commons Reconstruction Project.