

Niagara IDA approves 5 projects unanimously

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By Thomas J. Prohaska

WHEATFIELD — A makeover of an abandoned North Tonawanda factory and the construction of student housing at Niagara County Community College were among five projects that received unanimous final approval Thursday from the Niagara County Industrial Development Agency.

The IDA board also approved tax breaks for new training centers for Laborers Local 91 and Ridge Road Express, and the construction of a Motel 6 in Niagara Falls.

The \$15.1 million renovation of the former Remington Rand plant on Sweeney Street in North Tonawanda by Manhattan real estate magnate Anthony M. Kissling will be exempt from property taxes for 15 years. The four-story, 164,367- square-foot waterfront site is to be made into 51 loft spaces where young entrepreneurs can live and invent.

“The project itself is fairly innovative in addressing the needs of the entrepreneur and inventor,” IDA Assistant Director Larry D. Witul said.

Gregory Sehr, president of Upstate Consultants, which is working with Kissling on the project, said “deconstruction,” as he called it, will begin next spring. He said Kissling is talking with architects about detailed planning. The design firm has been chosen, Sehr said, but he declined to identify it.

He said students from the University at Buffalo School of Archi-

itecture will be invited to help with the planned rooftop garden and other “green” features of the building.

An antique boat museum and a restaurant to be opened by an executive chef from Manhattan also will be features of the complex, Sehr said.

He said a \$1 million state grant for the work has been approved but not yet delivered; that probably won’t happen until December.

Sehr said Kissling is asking Assemblyman Robin L. Schimminger, D-Town of Tonawanda, for \$2 million from the Assembly’s planned \$1 billion package of economic-development funding, which will be discussed next month.

“It’s a risky situation, but that’s what Mr. Kissling gets involved in,” said James B. Sullivan, executive director of the Lumber City Development Corp. “He’s succeeded at everything he’s done, so we’re very confident.”

Meanwhile, the IDA board approved \$20 million in tax-exempt bonding authority for NCCC’s Student Village Housing Corp. to build the planned housing on campus. The first phase will accommodate up to 300 students. Tax-exempt bonding is the only type of IDA activity that the County Legislature needs to vote on; Witul said the vote will occur Sept. 4.

Local 91’s \$2 million construction trades training center in the IDA’s Vantage International Pointe industrial park here will receive a 15-year schedule of payments in lieu of taxes, or PILOTs. The union bought 18 acres of land from the IDA earlier this year for \$90,000. It will make \$436,000 in PILOT payments over 15 years.

Seven Group, developers of the new 73-room Motel 6 at Niagara Falls Boulevard and 91st Street in Niagara Falls, was granted a 10-year PILOT deal for that \$3.68 million project. The PILOT payments will total \$855,000 over 10 years. Sixteen jobs are to be created.

Ridge Road Express’ new \$1.3 million bus driver training center on Junction Road in Lockport also was given a 10- year PILOT. Taxes on the lot are to rise from the current \$7,500 a year to \$309,000, according to the IDA project summary. Eleven new part-time jobs are expected.

The IDA board also extended a sales tax exemption for six months on construction of the Niagara at Barton Hill conference center and hotel in Lewiston, which IDA attorney Mark J. Gabriele said is still incomplete. It also allowed Barton Hill to refinance its mortgage.

Also, Coldwell Banker Commercial Meridian was hired for another year as the real estate broker for lots in Vantage International Pointe.

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