



Allegany County Industrial Development Agency

Crossroads Center
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February 17, 2021

Jenny M. Bilotta
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Cuba, NY 14727
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Attention: Jenny M. Bilotta

This letter is a response regarding your letter and the follow-up to the public hearing held February 9, 2020 regarding the relocation of Great Lakes Cheese to the Crossroads area. Thank you for recognizing our efforts at retaining Great Lakes Cheese for Allegany County. As you noted losing them entirely would be a devastating blow to all residents. Below are answers in bold to your questions.

Q : With that being said, I'm still questioning how much effort was put into keeping Great Lakes Cheese in Cuba? Was as much effort put into that as has been put into moving the facility? As a resident and taxpayer in the Town of Cuba, I grew up on the dairy farm just down the road from the cheese factory. My husband and I built a home fourteen years ago on the hill just past the cheese factory. My dad and several other family members have worked at the cheese factory for years. Needless to say, I know the surrounding area very well. Therefore I'm still struggling at the fact that the current property is not big enough. How can 382.76 acres not be feasible when they are only looking to acquire a fraction of that at the new site? I'm also struggling with the fact that too much of it is built into the hill behind the plant. Can the old Incinerator Plant be demolished so that portion of the land can be better used?

The property that the current treatment plant substation is on and the property adjacent to it on Keller Hill Road equates to 145.1 acres. This is land GLC already owns. I question why funds can't be invested into excavation for that land? Additionally, the Stella Cole Farm that GLC already owns is 161.64 acres. Was discussion ever had with the property owners around the current Great Lakes site? I know the answer to this question is no because my family happens to own that property. Was thought ever given to moving the road (County Road 6) back to its old location where it was years ago and acquiring the field across from the current entrance off the new County Road 6? I feel there are numerous options that were not entertained, and it's very disappointing for the residents of Cuba.

A: Although you bring up many questions on sites I assure you that Great Lakes Cheese has looked at over seventy sites including many in Cuba since before June 2019 and worked with the ACIDA since November 2019. ACIDA, GLC have made considerable efforts, with the assistance of municipal officials to find an acceptable site within the Cuba borders,

delaying project efforts for six months. Unfortunately, for many reasons, none of the Cuba sites were deemed acceptable by GLC. Please keep in mind that only GLC makes the determination of final site selection, The ACIDA and GLC are limiting the impact to the community by preserving local jobs, many of which are residents of Cuba, by keeping the plant close to Cuba within Allegany County. The ACIDA is also requiring use of local labor for as much of the construction as feasible.

Q: As a local school tax collector, I'm well aware of PILOT agreements and how drastic drops in assessed values can impact the entire tax base. I understand the good and bad of PILOT agreements. I understand that they attract businesses, but the key is to devise them so the rest of the taxpayers don't bear the brunt of the tax burden. I feel the proposed PILOT agreement is way too lucrative for GLC.

A: **It is important to note that we are competing with many states and even other counties in New York State and without these incentives we are not competitive. Most states have enhanced ways to entice companies to expand and be attracted to their state. Without these incentives including the PILOT the ACIDA would not have been able to convince Great Lakes Cheese to build a new \$500 million facility in the county. The PILOT and all exemptions or incentives, as you know, have no immediate impact on taxes or tax payers since we are exempting a company from future taxes on a facility that has not yet been built. The goal is to use these exemptions or incentives to encourage expansion and attraction of companies by softening the blow of the capital investment of a new or improved facility.**

Q: Additionally, I worry about how this will impact the taxpayers of the Town of Cuba, once the assessed value of the GLC property decreases. That tax burden will then be shifted to the rest of the taxpayers. \$4,406,000 in assessed value will rapidly diminish if there is no use of that property. Has an analysis been done to see the impact on the other taxpayers once the factory closes? The taxpayers have already felt the effects of several other buildings being closed.....the original Acme Electric building, the new Acme Electric Building, and the Cookie Factory just to mention a few. I fear we are driving residents out of our hometown.

A: **There is no question there will be a negative impact to the local taxpayers, but it will be worse if the company – and 200 factory jobs and the farm and other jobs they support –leave the area. The ACIDA is finalizing a cost benefit analysis of the project in Amity and Belfast. The ACIDA plans to work with Cuba and GLC to find the most beneficial use of the Cuba facility in the future. We will be working with Cuba officials on developing plans that would include the newer Acme Electric building and other facilities as well. The ACIDA has been working with Site Selectors and Invest Buffalo Niagara on the new Acme building with the Seneca nation to assure that great facility is on the radar of local and national companies for development. With GLC moving so close to Cuba the same employees in the Cuba facility will stay employed and that was a main goal of GLC.**



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Q: As a school tax collector, I naturally worry about the impact of the school district, especially during these financially unstable times we are already facing. Has the IDA considered what impact this will have on the bond rating for local municipalities, including the school? Once the factory leaves Cuba, investors will look at that unfavorably and it will naturally decrease the bond rating of the school and other municipalities.

A: Again as noted we will be working with Cuba to minimize impacts of the move from Cuba

Q: Lastly, as you're already aware, the venue in which this public meeting was held was not very good. It was extremely difficult to hear what you were saying. I would highly recommend that another public hearing be held, using a platform such as TEAMS or Zoom to broadcast your message, that way you can control people's microphones. This is a great opportunity for shared services between municipalities. We have mastered public presentations in the school system over the past year, so I'm sure any of the local school districts would be willing to assist you, myself included!!!!

A: The current format of how public hearings are held is under review, but for the most part the questions and answers were heard, and the recording is available on our website if anyone would like to listen. A transcription will be posted when complete. Any written comments are sent to the full board as part of the public hearings. Please note that the next public hearing notice was already published and therefore cannot be altered

Thank you for taking the time send me your concerns. GLC has looked at over seventy sites since before June 2019 and worked with the ACIDA since November 2019. We are very fortunate that GLC has a commitment to their current employees. Site selection included working very hard last year on Cuba sites. Most companies would have probably left the area and not looked at sites in or close to Cuba at all, let alone for that length of time.

Sincerely



Craig R. Clark
Executive Director

cc Dave Decker, Mike Healy, John Ricci, Skip Wilday, Curt Crandall