

Resolution Opposing the Proposed Public Auction of Certain Property on the Eastern Shore of Cayuga Lake by the New York State Electric and Gas Corporation (NYSEG)

WHEREAS, New York State Electric and Gas Corporation (“NYSEG”) owns a 470-acre parcel of land on the eastern shore of Cayuga Lake, in the Town of Lansing, which parcel is known in Tompkins County as the “Bell Station Property,” and

WHEREAS, the Bell Station Property includes more than 3,000 feet of pristine, undeveloped shoreline and a mature forest with two scenic gorges, and provides prime wildlife and bird habitat, and

WHEREAS, the Bell Station Property has been identified as part of the “Finger Lakes Shoreline and Riparian Zones” category of Regional Priority Conservation Projects in the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation’s Open Space Conservation Plan (at pages 149-150), a comprehensive plan that describes the State’s current open space conservation goals, and

WHEREAS, the Bell Station Property has been designated by the Tompkins County Environmental 16 Management Council as a Unique Natural Area (“UNA”), based upon the property’s unique geology, topography, and botanical and biological diversity, and

WHEREAS, the purpose of the UNA designation is to identify and describe areas in the County with outstanding environmental qualities, to identify and describe areas in the County with outstanding environmental qualities, and to help people make informed choices about development in or near these areas, and

WHEREAS, the Bell Station Property has been listed as the number one “distinctive view” in the Town of Lansing’s 2021 Scenic Resources Inventory, and has been designated as future public-access conservation land in the Town of Lansing’s Comprehensive Plan, and

WHEREAS, because almost 90% of the Cayuga Lake shoreline is privately owned, the value of conserving and dedicating shoreline property to public access is extremely important to the residents of Tompkins County, and

WHEREAS, the Bell Station Property has been identified by the Finger Lakes Land Trust (“FLLT”) as a priority conservation parcel, and

WHEREAS, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) has designated the FLLT as its agent in seeking the acquisition of the shoreline portion of the Bell Station Property for the establishment of a public wildlife management area, and

WHEREAS, the Bell Station Property is large enough to permit development of a solar installation as well as conservation of its shoreline and natural areas, and

WHEREAS, for the foregoing reasons, local stakeholders, including the FLLT, representatives of the Town of 41 Lansing, and Senator Pamela Helming, have attempted to convince NYSEG to negotiate a sale of the Bell Station Property to the FLLT for the purposes of conservation, recreation, public access to Cayuga Lake, solar energy production, and

WHEREAS, NYSEG recently, and without warning to the local stakeholders, listed the Bell Station Property for sale by public auction, describing it as “commercial land” and “a perfect candidate for potential waterfront residential development” (see <https://www.ten-x.com/listing/bell-station-lansing-ny-14580/1000014888/>), and

WHEREAS, according to the auction sale posting, NYSEG’s sale of the Bell Station Property is contingent on obtaining regulatory approval from the New York State Public Service Commission as required by Section 70 of the Public Service Law, and

WHEREAS, the benefit to rate payers of NYSEG’s proposed commercial auction sale to NY is not as great as the benefit to rate payers and County and State residents of a negotiated private sale that would result in conservation of the shoreline and natural areas, as well as possible development of much-needed community solar installation on part of the property, and

WHEREAS, the New York State Department of Environmental Quality, Tompkins County, and the Town of Lansing have all clearly identified preservation of the shoreline and natural areas of the Bell Station Property in their current,

undeveloped state as a priority for environmental and recreational purposes, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the Tompkins County Legislature requests that NYSEG take action to cancel the proposed auction of the Bell Station Property and instead immediately enter into negotiations with the FLLT to bring about a sale for conservation that would provide NYSEG with fair market value compensation for the property,

RESOLVED, further, That a certified copy of the resolution be sent to Governor Kathy Hochul, the Honorable Basil Seggos, Commissioner of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the Honorable Michelle I. Phillips, Secretary to the New York State Public Service Commission, New York State Senate Leader Andrea Steward-Cousins, New York State Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, New York State Senator Pamela Helming, and New York State Assembly Member Anna Kelles.

SEQR ACTION: TYPE II-26 28 1