

Cornell Ag & Food Tech Park slated for \$645,000 in funding in new federal budget

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by Linda McCandless

GENEVA, NY: "Congressman Reynolds' support of \$645,000 for the Cornell Agriculture & Food Technology Park in the 2001 VA/HUD budget is exciting news," said James E. Hunter, Director of the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, in Geneva, NY. "These funds will help support planning and construction of the initial infrastructure of the park. That includes water, sewage, roads, utilities and an in-depth Environmental Impact Statement. Depending on our success in securing additional funds, a portion of this money may be used for actual construction of the first incubator research building."

Hunter's comments were in response to U.S. Representative Thomas M. Reynolds

(R-NY27) announcement at this morning's press conference at the Experiment Station, that he has secured \$645,000 in funding for the project in a new federal budget. Reynolds, who said the funding will be used for infrastructure needs, had the funding included in the fiscal year 2001 VA/HUD budget that is expected to be approved by the House of Representatives later this week.

"This is an ambitious project that will make the area a world leader in horticultural, biotech and food science research," Reynolds said. "Just as important, it's a major economic development initiative that will help create hundreds of new jobs in our community."



Suggested caption: Congressman Thomas Reynolds announced \$645,000 in funding for the Cornell Agriculture & Food Technology Park.

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It's estimated that as many as 150 full-time employees can be on staff within three years of the park's completion, said Reynolds. In addition, more than 140 contracting entities are expected to use the park.

"With a continued, strong partnership of federal, state and local governments, academic and the private sector, the Geneva Station has tremendous potential for great success," he said. "And once it's up and running, will have an incredible impact on the residents of Ontario County."

The money will go to the Cornell Agriculture and Food Technology Park Corporation, the not-for-profit corporation that has just been formed for the planning, management and development of the park.

Reynolds was joined at the announcement by Board of Supervisor's Chairman Donald Ninestine; County Administrator Geoff Astles; City Manager Rich Rising; Mike Manikowski, Executive Director of the Ontario County IDA; Valerie Bassett, Economic Development Zone Specialist in the City of Geneva's Planning and Economic Development department; Melanie Stepp, Director of the Geneva Area Chamber of Commerce; Steve Johnson, Assistant Vice President of Government Affairs for Cornell University; and New York State Senator Michael Nozzolio. Over 60 Experiment Station faculty, staff and students filled the room to capacity.

Nozzolio, who has been working to provide state assistance for the project praised Reynolds' efforts to secure the federal funding. "This needed funding will provide the kind of momentum we need to keep this project moving forward," Nozzolio said. "And I'm grateful for Congressman Reynolds' leadership in garnering \$645,000 in federal support."

"This is the first large-scale grant that will begin to make this project reality," said Rich Rising, Geneva City Manager. "It is a crucial project for economic development in the city and takes advantage of the extraordinary technology at the Experiment Station to create jobs and further Geneva's economic revitalization."

"As of yet, we do not have any firm commitments from potential tenants," said Michael Manikowski, Executive Director of the Ontario County Industrial Development Agency, one of the park's partner agencies. "However, our preliminary marketing study showed tremendous interest from private companies wanting to position themselves near the Station, in the park."

Hunter and others in Geneva believe the park is needed to help ensure the long-term viability of the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station as a world leader in research related to agriculture, food science, and biotechnology. The park will also enable the Station to continue to attract and retain outstanding scientists and provide a stimulating and creative research environment that will lead to benefits for agriculture, food and biotechnology businesses in New York.

Reynolds' district consists of Wyoming, Livingston, Ontario, Genesee, Wayne, and parts of Erie, Monroe, Seneca and Cayuga counties. It ranks number 1 in New York, at \$785 million, in the market value of agricultural products sold, and second in the number of farms, at 6,087. And, at 1.5 million acres of farmland, the Congressman's district ranks number 1 again. "Because Reynolds' district is so heavily agricultural, his support is extremely valuable to our cause with the New York State Legislature," said Hunter.

State legislation must be approved to convey land with a long-term lease from the State University of New York (SUNY) to the recently formed corporation to develop and manage the park. Enabling legislation passed the NY State Senate in 2000, but failed to come to a vote before the Assembly. It will be proposed again in the 2001 session. Assemblymen Edward Sullivan (D-69th), William Magee (D-11th), Martin Luster (D-125th), and Brian Kolb (R-129th) came to the Experiment Station earlier this month on a fact-finding mission about the park.

[related story at <http://www.nysaes.cornell.edu/pubs/press/current/legislativetour.html>]

"I ended that meeting feeling that all four legislators had a better understanding of programs at the Station and the benefits of the park. I am optimistic that the bill will receive favorable support in the upcoming session of the Legislature," said Hunter.

Companies in the park will carry out research in agriculture, food and biotechnology that complements the research and extension programs of Cornell's 800-acre Experiment Station. The proposed 78-acre research park adjacent to the Station will provide incubator space for entrepreneurs, multi-tenant buildings for small companies, and land for well-established companies to build their own research buildings. In addition to the basic infrastructure, the proposed facilities for the park include a \$2.5 million incubator research building, a \$1.13 million greenhouse, and a \$2.8 million multi-tenant building. Development is planned in three phases with build-out for the first two phases expected to take three years.

[related story at <http://www.nysaes.cornell.edu/adm/agtech/>]

According to the Market Feasibility Study, many of the companies that expressed interest in locating in the park were food companies. It is not a production facility, however. "Successful products may be developed at the park, but would need to move to their own larger production facilities," said Hunter.

The Ag & Food Tech Park was initially proposed in the Station Master Plan in 1995 and endorsed by the City of Geneva's Master Plan in 1997. A project feasibility study and a preliminary environmental assessment of the Park site were completed in 1998; the Market Study and Business Plan completed in 1999.

The Cornell Ag and Food Tech Park project is a partnership between Cornell, the City of

Geneva and Geneva IDA, Ontario County IDA, Geneva Area Chamber of Commerce, Geneva Growth, Inc., Empire State Development Corporation, SUNY-State University Construction Fund, and representatives from the NYS Assembly and Senate.

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