

GROWTH & REDEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
February 11, 2014

The following are the minutes of the Growth & Redevelopment Committee Meeting, which was held on Tuesday, February 11, 2014, at 6:40 p.m., in the Lawrence Township Municipal Building, Lower Level Conference Room.

Statement of Proper Notice

Adequate notice of the regular meeting of the Lawrence Township Growth & Redevelopment Committee has been provided by filing an annual meeting schedule with the Municipal Clerk, and by filing the agenda with the Municipal Clerk, posting prominently in the Municipal Building, and mailing to the Trenton Times, the Trentonian and the Lawrence Ledger.

The roll was called as follows at 6:41 p.m.:

Present: Christopher Bobbitt, Ryan Kennedy, Lovette Love-Stevens, John Conroy, John Schoesser, Danielle Delprato, Harold Nelson, Donald Addison

Excused Absence: Tushar Patel, Karen Vincent, Charles Lavine, Max Ramos, Kevin M. Ralph

Absent: Jags Vazirani

Also Present: Andrew Link, Principal Planner/Business Advocate, Mayor Cathleen Lewis, Susan Snook, Secretary

Approval of Minutes:

The January 14, 2014 minutes were unanimously approved.

New Business Inventory:

Mr. Link stated he received the 2013 New Business Listing today from the Fire Marshal's office. Mr. Link stated he spoke to the Construction Office to get a copy of the Certificates of Occupancy. Mr. Link stated he will forward a copy to every member. Mayor Lewis stated to use the list for the start of the data base.

Chairperson Bobbitt asked if the letter was completed and Vice Chairperson Kennedy stated the letter was approved. Chairperson Bobbitt stated this coming month we will start with the new business list to send out the letter. Mr. Addison stated he thought it would be good on our part, that is the letters were delivered and he could handle that and we could verify who that person is we should be talking to. Mr. Addison stated that he needs a contact not an occupant. Mr. Link will print out the letters because they will be on letterhead and Chairperson Bobbitt will sign the letter and give it to Mr. Addison.

Special Olympics:

Mayor Lewis stated she has news: First she went to an Awards Ceremony at Special Olympics because they were received a grant from the State of New Jersey and she introduced herself to everyone she possibly could and stated the Township wants to be involved. They are in the first stages of doing a breakfast for all the Mayors in the region and asked Mayor Lewis if she would host in their facility to discuss what could be done. She expressed the desire to be part of the Special Olympics.

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In the Special Olympics building that there is going to be the family center and we would like to have some ambassadors there. Mayor Lewis stated she also knows someone who is publishing a magazine in Newark called "Guide for Special Olympics" naming businesses in Lawrence.

Vice Chairperson Kennedy stated on March 13th with Cherry Grove Farm will have a small no ask fund raiser for Special Olympics and is being sponsored by his office and it is a free event, if anyone is interested in attending.

Princeton Regional chamber on Independent Business Alliance:

Chairperson Bobbitt introduced the Princeton Regional Chamber. Peter Crowley stated he is the CEO and President of the Princeton Regional Chamber of Commerce and stated it is a 55 year old organization and is the 4th largest regional chamber in New Jersey. It has doubled in size in the last five years and covers six counties (Mercer, Summerset, Hunterdon, Middlesex, Monmouth and Bucks County). It has under a 1,000 corporate members and under 2,000 individual members. It is the largest woman in business alliance that has the largest woman's networking in New Jersey. It has a business bureau that is offered by the State of New Jersey that covers all of New Jersey and receives a grant every 2 years.

Mr. Crowley stated that 1.8 million visitors into our region and spend over 1.8 billion dollars. They have a partnership with Plainsboro to bring corporate entities into that Town and help them build their downtown. There is a young professional program which addresses young professionals in the region and runs a number of different programs. There are over 100 events that they do, such as a Mayor's forum, that runs every year which is two tiered.

Recently just introduced Independent Business Alliance because 80% of the membership are independent businesses and looking at the region that a number of localities (Princeton, Plainsboro, and W. Windsor) have come to ask how the Chamber can help them to build their downtown or help them build corporate opportunities for companies to relocate there. The independent business alliance has for the first time brought together all the independent businesses in the region to focus on the importance of those independent businesses in the Community.

Debbie Schaeffer is the President of Mrs. G's. and is an advocate of Sustainable Lawrence and participated in the Living Local Expo which focuses on energy; last year was the focus on the independent businesses in Lawrence and more information on how important it is to support local businesses which strengthens the community. The big box business (Costco, Wal-Mart) makes jobs but they also put some local businesses out of business.

Lawrence needs to come up with a logo and join with sustainable Lawrence. It is not just retail; it is business to business and business to consumers. It is to help the business side to get the message across to the consumers to do local first because it will make a difference to the local communities. Ms. Schaeffer discussed the handout dated November 1, 2013, copy attached. It is at the end all about creating jobs.

Mr. Crowley stated is to buy local and not only to create jobs but they also give back to the community. Mr. Crowley introduced Adam Perle, V. President of the Visitors Bureau. The convention and visitors bureau has been around since 2004. The funding they receive is to market the region. Visitors stay in the hotel room and 3% comes to the Township and 5% goes to the State.

Mr. Crowley stated the goal here is to help Lawrence and have not done a lot to help Lawrence. Mr. Crowley stated they should have reached out earlier and not only to provide the Township with opportunity but their expertise. They can help townships with great ideas economically.

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The Board members asked questions of Mr. Crowley about helping companies relocate; rules and regulations; creating their own CBB's. The chamber can bring value to each Town and it is their job to inform the businesses what the benefits are of that town; not just to compete it works as a cohesive approach. Mayor Lewis stated that each business thinks their problem is unique and is this a way to bridge the gap. Mr. Crowley stated is it a process that does not happen overnight and Lawrence does have a bunch of small "pockets" and each one is unique in their own make up and how to approach them to do things. How do you get them to look that they are a part of Lawrence. Mayor Lewis stated this is the biggest problem having the Community to see themselves as the same Town.

Ms. Schaeffer stated you have to start small and try to get those businesses that are still there to make an alliance like Main Street Community and then Quaker Bridge Mall Community. Mr. Perle stated the independent business alliance take tools and brings to the local leaders and help solve the issues; how to talk to businesses; how the businesses should be working together and will happen by having an event that will connect the people, whether a Chamber event or have a webinar for local business owners. Mr. Conroy stated there is an identity crisis because some businesses in Lawrence state "Princeton" where his address states "Trenton".

Mr. Addison stated zip codes mean nothing; it is what you have to offer. The chamber brings marketability and you need something other than a government saying we are here for you. Mayor Lewis asked where does that mechanism come from because there is no funding at the moment and the businesses are reluctant to participate; what mechanism is there or identify the local leaders. Danielle Delprato stated the infrastructure is a problem and maybe there should be a neighborhood feeling throughout the Township from Route 1 to Quakerbridge Road.

Ms. Delprato stated the quality of the items sold in the smaller businesses has an effect on the environment. Ms. Schaeffer stated that smaller business have not joined the Chamber because it is big business (banks, insurance) and suggested stake holders (retail or business to business) to invest some money along with a grant from the Township to start small like GEPNA.

Ms. Schaeffer stated the best place for any business to be on is "Yelp", it is free. Mr. Perle feels not spending a lot of time with one specific event. Mr. Conroy stated that we should request that Bristol Myers Squibb help promote Lawrence because they want to grow smoothly in Lawrence. Mayor Lewis stated the Chamber is a very good middle man. Mayor Lewis stated maybe there is a way to engage Bristol Myers Squibb to host some of the small businesses.

Chairperson Bobbitt asked if the IBA going forward; will there be a working group and how would it make sense for us to identify stake holders, or GEPNA. Ms. Schaeffer stated there is a committee that consists of about 15 – 20 people from the chamber that are independent businesses and are broken into three sub-committees; one is strategic planning; events committee (planning events) and community relations committee to identify the different local business alliances within Mercer County to identify the people to see where they are in their campaigns and keep going. Mr. Crowley stated it would be helpful if there was a stake holder. Chairperson Bobbitt asked if it should be a local business; however, Ms. Schaeffer stated it should be part of sustainable Lawrence and suggested that the Princeton Regional Chamber of Commerce put something together and present it the Board in another month; however, Mr. Crowley stated he would like to ask Council to have 1 or 2 people help the Chamber because you need someone who knows and understands Lawrence.

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Chairperson Bobbitt stated we have been struggling with the directory and the letter and getting that small business conversion going so they might have a lot of expertise on getting the ball running and move ahead.

1st Constitution Bank Meeting:

Ms. Delprato stated that the April meeting will work for them and told them it starts at 6:30 p.m. and will end 7:30/800 p.m.

Awards Program:

Mr. Conroy stated we need to find a venue. The Board members suggested Bonefish and Outback to do a breakfast; Chambers Walk is a little tight) to hold 100 people; ETS; Lawrenceville School, IBW; Bowling Alley; Rider University and they must be a Chamber member. Chairperson Bobbitt stated he will talk to the Chamber about Bonefish.

Mayor Lewis stated we might want to do something with the owner of the Lawrence Shopping Center. It was a company that usually flips developments and has not done it yet.

Chairperson Bobbitt stated we have the Awards Ceremony with Mid-Jersey and they do the marketing for it and is part of their schedule and this year they will do the sponsorships as well. Mayor Lewis asked if they were sponsoring the awards as well and they are not.

The Awards Ceremony is the Wednesday after Columbus Day.

Other Business:

Mayor Lewis is asking each Committee to come before Council to give a presentation for an update and asked if the Committee wants to do it after the awards ceremony or in September.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:19 p.m.

Digital audio file of this meeting is available upon request.

The next meeting will be held on March 11, 2014.


Susan Snook, Secretary
Growth & Redevelopment Committee