

GROWTH & REDEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
March 11, 2014

The following are the minutes of the Growth & Redevelopment Committee Meeting, which was held on Tuesday, March 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 6:36 p.m.:

Present: Christopher Bobbitt, Ryan Kennedy, John Conroy, John Schoesser, Harold Nelson, Donald Addison, Boynton R. Weekes, Andrew Bedryk

Excused Absence: Lovette Love-Stevens, Tushar Patel, Jags Vazirani, Karen Vincent, Charles Lavine, Danielle Delprato, Kevin M. Ralph, Mayor Cathleen Lewis

Absent: Jose "Max" Ramos

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

Approval of Minutes:

The February 11, 2014 minutes were unanimously approved with an amendment.

Introduction of New Members:

Chairperson Bobbitt welcomed the new members, Boynton R. Weekes and Andrew D. Bedryk and introductions were made.

New Business Letter:

Chairperson Bobbitt stated that the new business letter was signed by the Mayor and himself and will be sent out to the following six businesses: Polish Connection, 1051 Brunswick Avenue; Refinery Systems, 11 Princess Road; Quaker Bridge Mall – Godiva Chocolatier; Auntie Anne's, East Meets West; and A & M Motorsports and Electronics, 1640 Princeton Avenue. Mr. Addison stated he will deliver the letters as stated at last month's meeting.

New Business Inventory

Unfortunately Mr. Ramos was not at the meeting; therefore, there is nothing new at the present time. Mr. Link stated he sent out the Certificates of Occupancy, and we are getting copies of them now as well as the Fire Marshal's list. Once Mr. Link receives them he will forward them to the Board members.

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Vice Chairperson Kennedy stated that if a person misses a meeting; some of the things we do, if one is to miss a meeting it will take somewhere between 3 or 4 months between action items; perhaps setting up some type of on-line group or forum to keep the business going. Chairperson Bobbitt stated from other Boards they have a quorum; however this Board (Planning) does not have a budget and we are an advisory Board and have no authority to do anything. The Board does not want to lose momentum on this type of stuff. Mr. Link will take this concern to the Manager.

Princeton Regional Chamber on Independent Business Alliance:

Chairperson Bobbitt stated one of the things that Peter Crowley, Debbie Schaeffer and Adam Perle is they could do a lot of different things to help us out; but we need to give them a sense of what we wanted to do as a group and get back to them. Mr. Conroy stated they would help but would not do it.

Chairperson Bobbitt asked the Board members if they have any ideas and suggested Sustainable Lawrence or being presented at the Living Expo; we could reach out to GEPNA or Main Street or at Colonial Lake Lanes. We could talk to business owners at the Shopping Center. We need to know how to approach this so we can get back to Princeton Regional and this is our idea and how can you help us.

Mr. Conroy stated we need to plan more events and maybe we have Mid Jersey helping us with the Awards Program and he suggested a business gathering we could do thru Princeton Chamber which would get a different crowd. The events need to be planned ahead of time and do it this time next year.

Mr. Addison suggested that Chairperson Bobbitt contact Adam Perle as a follow-up to their presentation and see if the Board members and the Chamber could work together and come up with suggestions particularly in the range of Outreach and opening up the doors to their events.

Vice Chairperson Kennedy suggested cash mob; social media to make sure all our small businesses are set up properly such as Yelp. Mr. Nelson stated when we want to engage a group like the Chamber we need to have a set goal in mind and there are certain bench marks that we want to reach our progress on. If our goal is to bring new businesses in, we should try to identify what types of businesses we want to bring in and then create an event or an activity design to highlight the need for that group or the group that has just moved in to get them started. If we have a goal then it would be easier to figure out that organization to play with us and without that we are waiting for something to happen which is unproductive.

Mr. Addison asked if we should sit back and wait or meet with them. Mr. Nelson stated they don't know what our needs are. We need to figure out our needs and where to go from there to achieve it. Chairperson Bobbitt asked the Board members to start thinking about events before he contacts Mr. Perle. Mr. Bedryk asked what are we trying to do. Mr. Nelson stated we should ask the other Chamber what does a successful town business profile look like. How many successful businesses does a Town have? Then we could look at how they are structured and then compare us to them and then identify deficiencies and have some targets. We should work on what is deficient. Mr. Bedryk stated we are trying to reach out to that business.

Mr. Conroy stated we have the demographics on Lawrence and what other communities have. Mr. Nelson has a well-defined demographic map. What makes these populations settle in a certain area and what do they need? We might find out that the divisions in Lawrence or sectors and identify them to have them come together. Mr. Nelson will bring a copy of the map to the Township.

Mr. Weekes clarified that he thought we were talking about providing some assistance to existing businesses through social media and outlets and then it moved to new businesses. What is our mission and is it to attract new businesses to Lawrence Township and looking for that assistance from the Princeton Chamber or is it to help existing businesses or both?

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Chairperson Bobbitt stated that we are an advisory board to the Council on business matters in the Township. The meeting last month with the Princeton Chamber, they were highlighting was the start of the Independent Business Alliance which was to help independent businesses to compete against big box stores and to add awareness that when you spend a dollar in that business in the Township it stays in that Township. We want to accomplish is to help new businesses and existing businesses.

Mayor Lewis would like all the Committees to appear before Council to discuss what we are doing. Council knows the Township really well and we should use them as a resource. Mr. Boynton thought we can decide as the Board, one or the other and that is our mission and get behind it and then move onto the secondary.

Vice Chairperson Kennedy suggested that we need to spend some time thinking that we are at the discretion of Council, but at the same try to figure out what our mission is and having a lot of options of things to do and a list of tasks that we have set up for ourselves. This will give us more time to focus on the mission and then start on the goals. The next meeting we should refocus on what we our core of mission is (redevelopment, new business, etc.).

Chairperson Bobbitt asked Mr. Weekes, who owns a store in the Lawrence Shopping Center, how it is dealing with the Township (neutral, negative, and positive). Mr. Weekes commented that the township is fairly neutral, very little involvement from the Township and discussed the sign ordinance and suggested that the sign ordinance needs to be looked at for signs located in a shopping center. Mr. Link commented that the sign ordinance is a sore subject with businesses; the way to approach that is to go to Council; but the businesses have to abide by the Ordinance. If you do not have satisfaction with the Zoning Officer, next step is to Council. Vice Chairperson Kennedy said this Board should investigate this issue and study the ordinance and maybe make suggestions to fix it. Mr. Weekes thought that the sign ordinance should be treated differently for shopping centers.

Chairperson Bobbitt will talk to Mr. Perle at the Alliance and will give the report next month or will send an e-mail to all the Committee members. Vice Chairperson Kennedy stated the Committee needs to do some research and work towards keeping on the sign issue; however, changes may not be able to be made. The Committee members stated that a sign on Route 206 will be dangerous if it blew onto the road; however, a shopping center should be looked at differently and maybe certain days or hours could also work. It was also suggested that we should like at other Townships and see what they do for sign and reach out to businesses for their concerns.

1st Constitution Bank Meeting:

Nathalie Cassion from 1st Constitution Bank attended the meeting. April's meeting will be held at 1st Constitution Bank located on Lawrenceville-Pennington Road in the conference room and the office will be closed.

Mr. Conroy suggested to Ms. Cassion that a representative from the Bank should be present to tell the Board about their business and why this bank is special and help promote the business. Mr. Addison stated there are 15 banks in the Township and are members of the Chamber.

Ms. Cassion attended a business card exchange in Hamilton Township and the Committee should think about doing this and will be hosted by 1st Constitution Bank.

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Awards Program:

Mr. Conroy asked if anyone reached out to Bonefish to see if they would host the Awards Ceremony, only if they were a Chamber member. Chairperson Bobbitt will reach out to the Manager.

Jeffrey Otto was mentioned who is an appraisal who does general real estate trends. Chairperson Bobbitt explained the Awards Program to the new members and that it is a way of recognizing people who help with businesses.

Special Olympics:

There is nothing new.

Other Business:

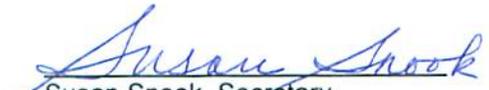
Chairperson Bobbitt told the members about Auto Lenders site on Monday's night Planning Board and the Land Use Ordinance was changed for detoxification uses (definitions, medical offices, medical uses).

Mr. Addison has the 2014 N.J. chamber directory and has identified the businesses in Lawrence Township. The address, telephone number, fax number, e-mail and web site are in the directory. The list will be looked at the duplication and will copy and give the list to Mr. Link for the start of the data base.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

Digital audio file of this meeting is available upon request.

The next meeting will be held on April 8, 2014 and will be held at 1st Constitution Bank located on Lawrenceville-Pennington Road.


Susan Snook, Secretary
Growth & Redevelopment Committee