

GROWTH & REDEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
March 8, 2016

The following are the minutes of the Growth & Redevelopment Committee Meeting, which was held on Tuesday, March 8, 2016, at 6:30 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 and the Trentonian.

The roll was called as follows at 6:37 p.m.:

Present: Ryan Kennedy, Lovette Love-Stevens, Charles Lavine, John Conroy, John Schloesser, Joan Brame, Maria Connelly, Jeffrey Lang, Pam Mount (arrived 7:06 pm)

Excused Absence: Tushar Patel, Teresita Bastides-Heron, Susan Snook

Absent: Danielle Delprato, Boynton R. Weekes, Andrew D. Bedryk, Christopher Bobbitt, Council Liaison

Also Present: Andrew Link, Principal Planner/Business Advocate, Jude Martin-Cianfano

Welcome New Members:

The Board members introduced themselves to the new members who are Maria Connolly, Joan Brame, and Jeffrey Lang.

Election of Officers:

Nominations were opened to the floor for Chairperson. Joan Brame nominated Charlie Lavine for Chairperson. John Schloesser nominated John Conroy.

Mr. Lavine stated he worked very closely with Christopher Bobbitt over the past number of years; the liaison comes from the Zoning Board of Adjustment which is involved with projects dealing with major developments on what is happening in the Township; also involved with the Awards Ceremony with the award nominations; his desire is to do more outreach and more attendance of the members to have a quorum so that we can function. Mr. Lavine is retired which means he can attend grand openings, meetings, awards which he does not mind and enjoys representing the Township and the Committee. Mr. Lavine was asked how many years he served on the Zoning Board and it was around ten years.

Mr. Conroy stated ten years ago he was Chairperson for two years running and stepped down to allow others to be Chair. He runs a small business in the Township and is an active member on the Princeton Chamber; active member in the NJBIA; Small Business Development Association at Trenton State; actively working with small businesses to help them grow and expand; numerous articles that come out that help people promote businesses and all over Town to drum up work and see what is happening and a good understanding with what is happening here in the Township as well as in the County.

It was four votes for John and three votes for Charlie.

GROWTH & REDEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

March 8, 2016

Page 2

Chairperson Conroy opened the floor for nominations for Vice Chairperson. Joan Brame nominated Charlie Lavine for Vice Chairperson and seconded by John Conroy. Vice Chairperson Lavine accepted the position and it was a unanimous vote.

Mr. Lavine would like to recognize Ryan Kennedy for his service as Vice Chairperson and input and insight over the last few years. He gave a perspective from the legal end and from the development side.

Approval of Minutes:

The November 10, 2015 minutes were unanimously approved.

Public Comment:

None

Committee Goals:

Chairperson Conroy asked the members if anyone has any goals to set for the Committee to achieve this year. Ms. Brame asked what the biggest accomplishments or biggest contribution for the past five years. Chairperson Conroy stated the awards ceremony which has been going on for the past 15 years which is a breakfast held in the fall and is the most successful venture that the Board does because it gets to recognize new businesses in the Township and existing businesses. It gets the Lawrence community together on the business end which allows them to promote themselves.

For several years it wasn't just the award winner that was recognized but also the people who sponsor the awards. The last few years we have had the Chamber doing a lot more of that which might be a good idea to bring that back so we have twice as many businesses being recognized at the event.

One other thing is that we have been raising and slightly heated discussions about is signage. There seems to be one of the biggest complaints about businesses putting out temporary signage of a certain type in certain zones, example is the Lawrence Shopping Center where it would be nice to have them put out a sandwich board every once in a while to promote a special and it seems that what happened in Town is that some people have complained about the signage rule and once it is complained about and they see somebody else not obeying the signage rule then they squeal on them.

Ms. Brame stated she sees sandwich boards along Main Street in Lawrenceville and is this Board to approve the signage. Chairperson Conroy stated to create a sub-committee to review the signage and make recommendations. One of the main areas we are looking at is the Lawrence Shopping Center for a temporary sandwich board.

Mr. Lavine spoke about grand opening banners of various types which have been cases where the business decorates the store and the Township tells them to remove them, which is not fair. The banners should be left up for 3-months. We also sent out business letters to new businesses and trying to monitor the shopping center. Mr. Lavine stated he would like the Board to meet with the owner, Colliers because we have input and suggestions, so we need to be involved.

Chairperson Conroy asked if there are any other goals to set forth. Ms. Connelly asked if we have set goals in the past years; while Chairperson Conroy stated we have generally set some goals. Ms. Martin-Cianfano suggested media; Ms. Brame suggested to enclose something in our new business letter stating to attend our monthly meeting so if they have any questions. Mr. Kennedy suggested we start holding our meetings in other locations where we might have a better turnout and stated the Committee had a tour of Heritage Village, had a meeting at the bank, and the Ben Franklin School.

GROWTH & REDEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

March 8, 2016

Page 3

Ms. Brame stated there is an open invitation at the gym at the Lawrence Shopping Center and she is the liaison with the property manager. Chairperson Conroy stated it would show our support and asked Ms. Brame to see if we could have a meeting at the Lawrence Shopping Center. Mr. Kennedy stated that Collaboration Core at 3150 Brunswick Pike invited us to have our meeting there held on April 12, 2016.

Ms. Brame stated if we had a meeting in the Lawrence Shopping Center, we will invite the property manager, Debbie and not sure if she would be agreeable to meet. The Board could see the vacancy rate so we can do it in May or June. Mr. Kennedy asked about the noticing and Mr. Link will take care of it. Chairperson Conroy stated to the CollaborationCore in April and do the Shopping Center in May or every other month. Our May 10, 2016 will be held at the Lawrence Shopping Center.

Chairperson Conroy brought up the attendance of some committee members and how can we fill them. Most of the vacancies are for residents, not towards the businesses. This committee is more toward business than toward residents. The Board has more residents and they have other things going on in their life and cannot make all the meetings, which is understandable. Therefore, we can have Ms. Martin-Cianfano submit an application on Monday and we still have one business that can be part of the committee. Mr. Link confirmed there is one more vacancy and three resident vacancies. So Chairperson Conroy asked the Board to search out for a business and some residents to join and attend on a regular basis.

Chairperson Conroy stated if you have three (3) unexcused absentees in a row you can be dismissed from the committee and asked Mr. Link to send out letters this way we can find some people who can attend the meetings. Mr. Kennedy stated we have no budget; therefore, we have no actions we can take and we can just have our meetings and there are very select things we cannot do formally (examples like approving minutes and selecting a chair and vice chair). Chairperson Conroy stated one of our key roles is to we do not spend money, do not vote on anything; however, we make recommendations to Council and that is why we are in this organization to make us their ear to the public and help and/or enlighten them on things that are happening that Council may not hear of and make recommendations to Council so they can move forward on with certain things (like sign ordinance). There are 19 members and 7 makes a quorum.

Chairperson Conroy stated it was misunderstood that if we could rearrange how people in categories of who belongs on the Committee and they took it as to add more members on a 19 member committee already. It was not that we were asking for more people, we were trying to free up on who can join and who cannot join. It was noticed that the way the committee is structured right now under the law, you have to be a resident of the Township and there are a lot of businesses who are in Town but do not live in Town, they work here in Town. We would like an official recommendation to Council on not increasing the number of people we have on the committee, but lifting the restrictions on how we select them.

Mr. Link stated the way it is toward residency is because it is a Township committee and therefore it should reflect residents of the Township primarily business owners secondarily. Chairperson Conroy stated there is a new business coming into the Township and is purchasing property in Township and even though they don't live in Town but own property that is just one step not being able to be on the committee and they pay taxes. We should make a recommendation to Council on how we would like to see the committee evolve.

Ms. Brame asked about distributing the proportionate number in these four classes. Mr. Kennedy commented that we had a back log of business owners who wanted to be involved in the Committee, but could not be appointed. Ms. Brame stated who were business owners but did not live in Lawrence. Mr. Kennedy stated non-residents were full and could not be appointed. Ms. Brame stated 25% of the committee could be non-residents and asked if that percentage be increased if need be. Ms. Martin-Cianfano remarked that we should have a representative from the Lawrenceville Main Street, Quaker Bridge Mall and the Shopping Center so that way we were taking care of all the different types of businesses but did not get that far because of the way the classes were.

GROWTH & REDEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

March 8, 2016

Page 4

Chairperson Conroy asked Ms. Brame to find out about the business in the Lawrence Shopping Center, the smaller businesses such as if they live in the Town, if they work in Town and if they would like to play an active role. Ms. Brame asked if there was a current roster of the businesses in Town and where they live. Mr. Link stated only the Fire Marshal's list, so we may or may not have that information you are looking for. Mr. Kennedy stated we need to get access the business owners in the Town and tax records do not show the owner.

Ms. Mount stated there are 1,000 businesses and US1 has the best list and will reach out to a contact. This is an open public meeting and anyone is allowed to come and comment. Chairperson Conroy stated we do get people who come in when it is time for our awards ceremony. Ms. Martin-Cianfano stated she will get a fresh list from the Chamber and asked Chairperson Conroy to get a list from Princeton. This will be a start. Mr. Kennedy stated part of our goals if, when we get this list, would like to contact them. Chairperson Conroy stated this is why we should have a meeting at the Lawrence Shopping Center.

Ms. Brame stated there is one clear issue and that is getting those store fronts filled and when the new management company inherited a lot of stuff and spent a huge capital expense on roof replacement and the parking lot to the tune of millions. They are also facing outstanding rents from a lot of existing businesses. It has been extremely hard to attract and has not been a new business coming into that shopping center in the last six years. When they took over several years ago they had a beautiful marketing plan because the intent was to be a lovely hang out area for young families, to be a restaurant destination so families in that part of the community can come, multi-cultural, a lot of greenery with a beautiful design.

Ms. Martin-Cianfano said that the biggest problem is the 99 year lease issue that because of the big box stores that restricting anybody from all of the goods that they sell. Ms. Brame is not confident of that and does not have the knowledge of that. Ms. Martin-Cianfano stated that there are lease restrictions from anybody selling shoes, certain style of clothes, certain goods and that is the problem. The Committee members agreed to have a meeting at the Lawrence Shopping Center. Chairperson Conroy suggested to try and make it more pedestrian friendly where you can leave your car at home and make it a walkable destination. Chairperson Conroy stated to get the information from the management company and help with assisting them. Ms. Brame will set this up for June 10th.

Chairperson Conroy asked if anyone will be interested in setting up the sub-committee for the sign ordinance review to give us a brief review of where it is and how we think we can change it in a small way to help promote businesses in Town. It seems to be the temporary signage and how we can make recommendations to Council.

Ms. Connolly stated she will be on the Committee. Ms. Mount stated two people wrote the ordinance, Clarke Caton & Hintz, Brian Slaugh, and suggested talking to Brian who might be able to help us. Mr. Link stated he needs to run this by Mr. Krawczun. Chairperson Conroy stated there are things to cross off and just to gear down to specific piece of it, not every day general signage; to look at the promotional signage section of the ordinance. Ms. Connolly asked if there is a procedure now where the restaurant or business could ask for a waiver. Mr. Link stated he does not know what happened with the Asian Bistro.

Vice Chairperson Lavine stated we lost a very valuable member, Don Addison and suggested a moment of silence and to reflect on a good man. Chairperson Conroy commented one amazing thing about Don was you could always ask him how is it going and he stated I can't complain and knew a little about what was happening, you have so much to complain about and you never complain. He would go out and help other business to flourish and succeed in town. Chairperson Conroy would like to have an award for a person who helps businesses in town at the Awards Ceremony, not giving out every year, but when you find that exceptional person who helps businesses in Town and helps them out should be recognized.

GROWTH & REDEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

March 8, 2016

Page 5

Ms. Martin-Cianfano asked to make it happen this year, while Chairperson Conroy stated the key is to find an individual who actually meets the award. The Board members made recommendations on putting the information out there and make an announcement and do it next year. The next meeting to craft what the award is and what the requirements would be.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Digital audio file of this meeting is available upon request.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Susan Snook". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Susan Snook, Secretary
Growth & Redevelopment Committee