



MORRIS TOWNSHIP
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2021 – 6:00 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER

The October 4, 2021 meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Committee was called to order by Liam Gallagher (EDAC Chairman) at 6:03 P.M., via Zoom.

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ATTENDANCE

Mr. Ken Bariahtaris
Mr. Robert Berns
Ms. Jessica Brennan
Mr. Randall (Randy) Emond
Mr. Liam Gallagher
Ms. Elizabeth (Beth) Kujan
Mr. Jeffrey Mueller (absent)
Mr. Adam Smith

APPOINTED OFFICERS

Mr. Jeffrey Grayzel, Mayor
Mr. Timothy F. Quinn, Township Administrator
Ms. Kathy Viarengo, Tax Assessor

ALSO PRESENT

Rick Alcantara, Princeton Strategic Communications Group
Ms. Cathy Wilson, Township Committeewoman

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PRESIDING OFFICER'S STATEMENT RE: ADEQUATE NOTICE – O.P.M.A. – (RECORD INSERT)

Liam Gallagher issued the following statement of adequate notice:

“Adequate Notice” of this meeting of the Township Committee of the Township of Morris was given as required and defined by the Open Public Meetings Act, as follows:

Written Notice was given on January 15, 2021 to the official newspapers, Morris County Daily Record, by email at least 48 hours prior to the date of this meeting, and a copy of the Notice was posted on the Bulletin Board in the Municipal Building of the Township of Morris by the Township Administrator, and a copy of the Notice was likewise filed in the Township Clerk's Office. Copies of this Notice were mailed by Certified Mail to all persons who have requested Indi



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vidual notice, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 10:4-19, all of which Notices were given at least 48 hours prior to the date of this meeting, and said notice will be retained in the Office of the Township Clerk.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Liam Gallagher led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On a motion duly made, seconded, and carried by the votes as indicated, the readings of the 09/20/2021 meeting minutes were approved as circulated.

GENERAL BUSINESS

The first half of the meeting consisted of a presentation regarding the results of the property owners outreach by Rick Alcantara from Princeton Strategic Communications Group. The project was conducted between mid-August and mid-September. Out of the nine property owners invited to Zoom interviews, two participated and out of the eight owners invited to complete the online survey, four responded. The results revealed that the most important factors to most owners are location, access to the Convent train station and medical facilities, as well as proximity to residential housing. The drawbacks that many of the owners mentioned included the lack of a centralized business district and sidewalks, as well as the age of some of the buildings their businesses are located in. Five out of the six participants indicated that they would like to see more mixed-use zoning, as well as commercial zoning for food and shopping. Out of the four participants that completed the online survey, 75% was very pleased to hear about the RH Gallery at the Abbey and felt as if its arrival would benefit their businesses, while the remaining 25% was undecided. None of the participants indicated that the Abbey would affect their real estate strategy.

Rick noted that the results of the survey made it hard to make broad-based decisions and recommendations because of the low response rate, as only six out of the 19 owners participated. The need for the Township to be more pedestrian-friendly repeatedly came up. He also mentioned looking at the municipalities of Collingswood, Haddonfield, Parsippany, and Holmdel for examples of mixed-use success. Rick also stressed the need for a strategic, ongoing campaign to inform and educate both property owners and residents about zoning changes, applicati



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on approvals, infrastructure enhancements, and redevelopment projects. He also suggested following up in one year and inviting more property owners to participate.

GENERAL BUSINESS (CONTINUED)

Randy asked, “Can you correlate stay vs. leave factors?” Rick responded that the COVID-19-pandemic will be a leading factor due to the shift to permanent telecommuting as the need for large office buildings will be decreasing in many cases. Therefore, the size of the building is the biggest factor in whether a business will stay or leave rather than the Madison Avenue Corridor (MAC) itself. Committeewoman Wilson asked what successfully kept businesses in other towns. Rick mentioned mixed-use zoning and retail storefronts. He additionally stated that Morris Township would be an ideal candidate for that, as fewer people are commuting to NYC and are working at home or closer to home. The term “metroburbs” repeatedly came up throughout the presentation and Rick clarified that “metroburbs” are towns with highly-developed downtown areas consisting of retail, offices, high-density residential zones, walking paths, and bike lanes. Examples of “metroburbs” include Holmdel and Collingswood.

Mayor Grayzel asked if Rick could filter out bullet points from the report to share with residents. Rick stated that he will work on that over the next few days as the survey focused on the business side of things. The mayor also stated that residents can relate to the property owners’ desire for more sidewalks, food, and retail, as well as increased connectivity to the train station. Rick left the meeting at 6:46 P.M.

The second half of the meeting consisted of discussing a letter and survey to be sent to Township residents. Committeewoman Wilson stated that the letter that the public engagement subcommittee had been drafting for the past several weeks was pretty much finalized and that a hard copy will be sent to a certain range of residents (most likely the same residents who received a letter about the Abbey and possibly certain residents on Old Glen Road and Pitney Place). She also stated that EDAC needs to figure out a process to get resident input and that she wants to consult with a professional about how to best go about that process. Mayor Grayzel stated that funds will have to be allocated and that narrowing down the list of residents who will receive hard copies of the letter will be easier. Kathy Viarengo stated that since many of the condos in the Pitney Place and Village Drive complexes are tenant-occupied that notifying the complex managers and having them email residents will save money for mailing. She also stated that she will consult the tax map and highlight areas the letters should go to. Mayor Grayzel stated that he will work with Tim to allocate funds and Liam stated that the letter will also be posted digitally for all Township residents. They both agreed that this should happen as soon as possible.



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GENERAL BUSINESS (CONTINUED)

Randy showed the outline for a survey that he drafted for residential outreach. He stated that he assumes it will be conducted electronically. He asked if EDAC should consult a professional to help create the survey as well as whether it should focus strictly on the MAC or the entire Township. The survey will contain questions regarding commercial/business development, what is important to residents, and what the Township can improve upon. The questions will be both open-ended and five-point scales. The survey will also contain a checklist of words and phrases that best describe the Township including “affordable,” “quiet,” and “works for you.” Ken stated that the survey had brilliant structure, while Mayor Grayzel suggested adding a check box for “family-oriented.” Survey Monkey and Google Survey were both discussed as possible platforms, as the survey would reach more people as compared to sending it only to people subscribed to the Municipal Messenger.

ADJOURNMENT

The October 4, 2021 meeting, with no further business, was adjourned at 7:10 P.M.; next to convene at 6:00 P.M., December 6, 2021 via Zoom.

Nicole Donohue
EDAC Secretary