

BOROUGH OF BERLIN
ECONOMIC RE-DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MINUTES
February 16, 2010

Flag Salute

Roll Call:

Mike Mrvica, Chairman Joe Adolf, Frank Seman, Bob Suchowierski, James Knight, Councilman Jim Bilella, Rita Christenson, Drew Straub, Dottie Trait

Absent:

Councilman Nick Maccaroni, Gary Knight

Minutes:

A motion was made to approve the minutes from January 12th, 2010 by James Knight, and seconded by Councilman Jim Bilella. On Roll call Bob Suchowierski abstained, all others voted aye.

Discussion:

Chairman Adolf addressed the members regarding the empty Bank on Estaugh Avenue, it is under an agreement of sale and it should be a 60 day settlement.

Jiffy Lube-Goodman Properties- Chairman Adolf spoke with Adam Goodman who stated there is some remediation that needs to be done, however Jiffy Lube is uncooperative, so Goodman Properties is suing Jiffy Lube.

Berlin Auto Body- there is little to no interest in the property and the price has been reduced twice. The property is listed as a possible used car sales location, however auto repair and used car sales are a dual use, and would need to have Planning Board approval.

Chairman Adolf also contacted Stanbury Development regarding the Owens Corning site. He spoke to Mark Pottschmidt and after careful discussion Stanbury Development would like to channel their monies into completing the existing projects they have, and anything new construction is far off for them.

Jim Knight commented on Berlin Chrysler and spoke to Larry, he gave Jim the plans to the building. Chevy 73 has changed hands, at this point. It was noted by Debbie Simone that Luciano Gattinelli was interested in the Chevy 73 property for a sports bar/restaurant. Jim also spoke to someone regarding Carpet Flair, and could not get any information. It is for sale, but the owner's son was there, and encouraged future information to be addressed with his father.

Councilman Bilella stated he has contacted Walgreens. Originally they were looking at the Estaugh Ave. and White Horse Pike corner, as well as the corner of Taunton Ave. and Rte. 73.

They never came back to the board, but Jim got the real estate requirements. From what is shown, we have properties in the Borough that would be sufficient. They want a signalized intersection with 2 major roads. They work through developers, and if they are utilizing the same developer as previous, Jim will find out what it would take to get them to come to Berlin. Jim also mentioned that he has a sample marketing brochure to show demographics of a specific area. This would show major roads, the radius, map income, age bracket, and some quick bullets describing the area with a key map.

Dottie mentioned reaching out to Trader Joes. Trader Joes is a small gourmet supermarket. It is not a franchise, and Dottie requested a feasibility study online, and what information would be provided? Dottie had an idea to email Trader Joes, and if they get enough people to comment or show an interest, they may act faster.

Mike Mrvica asked about K-Mart. Chairman Adolf commented that the Borough went into negotiations, to put up townhomes. Before the Townhomes are built, they have to re-develop the commercial part. There is a sewer moratorium that has to be lifted before the commercial percentage can be built. Councilman Bilella commented that the Townhouses cannot be built until the Commercial section is built first. A certain amount of square footage of Commercial development along the White Horse Pike must be done. Frank Seman asked if there is a time frame on the agreement. Councilman Bilella stated he does not believe there is a time frame on the agreement. The sewer moratorium in place is a County issue from Winslow, and the County has stated they are moving forward, but again there is no time frame. Mike also asked if the group were to create a brochure, what co-operation would we receive from Council? Chairman Adolf stated we already have tax abatements. Mike stated he has people that he would like to reach out to. The ideal spot is the corner of Cross Keys Road and White Horse Pike. Chairman Adolf added that CVS wanted to go there but the owner was asking too much money for the property. That is a re-development zone, and so is the Kmart property as well as Owens Corning. Councilman Bilella added that some type of commitment would need to be made before any type of incentive could be offered, however a letter of encouragement from Mayor and Council could be addressed. Mike Mrvica also added that Luciano may be interested in the Cross Keys Road and White Horse Pike lot, instead of Chevy 73 as a re-development zone. Chevy 73 would have cars going one way, and there is no turn around. The other site has a 4 way intersection. That type of use would bring business to the center of town. Councilman Bilella added that by promoting businesses with later hours would promote activity in the Borough.

Mike Mrvica asked if there is anything that can be done with Carpet Flair to promote Municipal use or professional business use. If the buildings can be restored historically, would Council be interested, or would the Borough consider being a developer? Councilman Bilella stated we would have to look at no cost or low cost, you have to put money in, to get money out. Mike suggested floating a bond. Chairman Adolf added it would be difficult with the budget as it is now. Rita added that is what Collingswood did. They dumped revenue into the renovations, and now it is beautiful. Rita also brought up an idea that Drew had by making a business place for high speed internet, conference rooms, all for people who need to access this type of atmosphere, but don't have the facility to do so. Mike added that we keep talking about this, but

nothing gets done. Rita mentioned the list that was provided that we can put together a spreadsheet of the properties that are available, what the permitted uses are, how many acres, what is on the site, etc. Rita also mentioned that we need something that is a main attraction, something to draw other businesses. Mike mentioned that for anyone on the Planning Board, as the applicants come in, they put conditions on the applicant, the town should give something back, but he isn't sure of the legality. Chairman Adolf mentioned the CVS funded the traffic light, and Mr. Knight brought up that Eckerd Drugs paid for the move of the Hotel.

Chairman Adolf addressed the Façade treatments. There was no money in the budget for this, however this year we will have a zoning standard to start the process. He also addressed the fact that we could contact local banking institutions regarding low interest loans. Mike Mrvica addressed the business meetings that Rita holds. The businesses want to be here, to succeed, if the current business owners bring in a new business that they receive some type of incentive to build up the businesses in the center of town. Rita commented that there will be a fall fest on Berlin Day, there is a table/booth to enhance more businesses into the Borough as a way of marketing.

Chairman Adolf talked about a wish list, and he would like to see a nice restaurant, or an office or medical offices. That was one of the original ideas for that lot. Drew stated he feels we should be looking at skilled jobs, with higher educational facilities, technology firms, etc. for better paying jobs. Dottie added that the restaurant is someone we can contact now, we don't want to miss out on that. Rita mentioned doing a survey with the current businesses as to what other businesses would they like to see in the Borough, as well as doing some kind of exit interview or retention interview with a perspective business that may want to leave the Borough to give us an idea of how to keep the businesses here. Mike addressed the businesses in Camden, they may be "trapped". They are good solid businesses, but cannot expand. Target what we are going after. What about County or State Government? Councilman Bilella added that there is no tax revenue with that type of business. Councilman Bilella added that we should talk to Virtual, and find out what we can do to attract more medical offices closer to the hospital. Chairman Adolf gave an action list of things to do: Jim to send sample brochure, Contact Charlie, Rita/Jim do survey, Rita will look into something on Facebook, have a meeting with Virtua, speak with Mr. Gattinelli regarding the Chevy 73 lot, look into "finders fees." Rita listed her wish list: Yoga, Tea/Coffee shop, cookie/sweet shop, theatre, spa, Borders, Vermont Country Store, Trader Joes, Boutiques, Hip Housing.

With nothing further, Mr. Knight made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and Mr. Straub seconded the motion. All members voted aye.