

BOROUGH OF BERLIN
ECONOMIC RE-DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MINUTES
December 13th, 2011

Call to Order:

Flag Salute:

Roll Call:

Councilman Nick Maccaroni	Present
Kevin McHugh	Absent
Mike Mrvica	Present
Joe Adolf	Absent
Bob Suchowierski	Present
James Knight	Present
Councilman Jim Bilella	Present
Rita Christenson	Present
Drew Straub	Absent
Nick Guerere (Alt. 1)	Absent
Gary Knight (Alt. 2)	Present

Minutes: November 16th, 2011

A motion to approve the minutes for November 16^h, 2011 was made by Mike Mrvica, and seconded by Jim Knight. All members of the board voted aye.

Discussion:

Due to the absence of Joe Adolf, Jim Bilella chaired the meeting.

Jim Bilella asked for additional comments regarding the business survey so we can finalize it. We will send out the survey based on the current mercantile list, then follow up with phone calls. If we get a 2-3% return that is good. Rita mentioned she has 120 businesses registered with the Berlin Business Association. Rita mentioned a lot of the businesses listed on the mercantile list are from the Berlin Auction. She has hand delivered invitations to the Berlin Business Association to those in the Auction. Once we finalize the survey we can concentrate on the current businesses to get an idea of how the businesses feel about the Borough, and how we can attract other businesses.

Mike commented that the survey questions are in the packet, from that we can create our own survey. He made a suggestion to omit the name, address, and phone number information so it is more anonymous. We can match the Business Association list, with the current mercantile list. We can send out one survey that is very general, and see what feedback we get, and then send a second survey to be more specific. Rita mentioned that a new business in town folded, Debbie's florist had a coffee shop, and also a new Chocolate Shop opened in town. Also the new business in town, Faulk/Huber CPA is holding an open house. This is the old Carpet Flair building, and Rita feels that we all should attend to show we are "good neighbors."

Mike addressed the small coupon book he received on a trip to Easton PA. Inside the book are coupons, it is also an ad for the business, you can include a "welcome to Berlin" page, if each business paid \$75 for a full year ad, you would need 9.5 advertisers to break even, or for \$50 for a full year ad, you would need 14 advertisers. You could include things like religious institutions, information about the Borough, etc. on the front, and back of the book, you could promote the results of the survey as well.

Jim Bilella addressed finalizing the survey; he will get together with Rita, and work on a mailing. It can be issued through the Business Association via email, and mail the rest. Return mail would go to the Business Association, and by February we can begin the evaluation of the surveys. The next meeting the survey will be complete, give them 2 weeks to respond. Mike suggested to hand it out at the next Business Association meeting, and email as a follow up.

Rita addressed that the information regarding the Kmart plaza and future development needs to get out to the area. This would assist the current homeowners to understand the process regarding COAH and the Borough's requirements. Maybe letters could go out.

Rita commented that she might need to resign from the board. She can only be at the meetings sporadically, she is traveling back and forth to Vermont. She has been on the board for 2 years, and has not been able to fluctuate change, and feels discouraged, nothing has been accomplished. Jim Bilella added that we are only a committee and have no power; we can only plan and make suggestions. Nick added that we have been in litigation with developers, and we feel powerless as a Borough.

Jim Bilella mentioned to create goals to achieve for the next year. Bring those goals to the January meeting, and move forward instead of month to month. The landlord at the center where the McDonald's used to be, Ollie Gators is there, Franks Time Out, and now Good to Go Foods is there. The landlord does not take into consideration of the fact that they are all the same type of food being sold. Make the Borough become more conducive to businesses.

Nick commented on the old Stone's Camping world site, they are doctors approved for an Urgent Care facility, and have not started yet. Funding is the biggest problem. Rita added that with the hospital in Berlin, why do we not have more professionals in town, we should have a theme. Mike added that Collingswood had the Mayor pushing for the changes, and the investment that was made. We have great schools, and a great overall footprint. Jim will make the recommendation to Joe to have goals. Rita added as far as the Chamber of Commerce

application, if we are not able to join, go to a workshop 3 or 4 times per year, and network that way.

Adjournment:

Rita Christenson made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Mike Mrvica seconded the motion. All members voted aye.

Respectfully Submitted,

Debbie Simone

Cc: Charleen Santora, RMC, Business Administrator