

**BOROUGH OF BERLIN  
ECONOMIC RE-DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE  
MINUTES  
January 10th, 2012**

Call to Order:

Flag Salute:

Roll Call:

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

Minutes: December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2011

A motion to approve the minutes for December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2011 was made by Jim Knight and seconded by Kevin McHugh. All members of the board voted aye.

Election of Chairman:

A motion was made to elect Joe Adolf as Chairman by Gary Knight, and seconded by Jim Knight. All members of the board voted aye.

Discussion:

Chairman Joe Adolf addressed the membership for the South Jersey Chamber of Commerce, that will be taken care of this week.

Goals for 2012- Nick Guerere commented we need to bring businesses to town. Utilize the vacant properties, and get people in town.

Councilman Bilella added that the current property owners are not realistic in their asking price to sell, they are too high. Joe Adolf commented that he has spoken to developers and they are not taking on any new projects. They are finishing what they have first. With regards to the Owens Corning site, they are bankrupt.

In 1999 the Owens Corning site was declared a re-development zone. State statutes have changed. The town can hire a master developer. Councilman Maccaroni added that over the last 9 years we have come a long way. It seems at times we are spinning our wheels, however, we have Dunkin Donut's along with additional development that will be in the future, WaWa, Rocco's Collision, Lucien's has 2 additions, Carbone's used car sales, CVS, the Hotel was moved, King of Pizza, Dan Molnar's place 91 South, the old Carpet Flair, Comtech, Rite Aid, PNC Bank, Rita's Water Ice, Lucky Lou's, the Old Stone's Camping World, and the Hospital renovations. We have received a few phone calls regarding some vacant properties. We don't have a lot of boarded up buildings. We are in better shape than most. In the Shop Rite shopping center, there are 4 empty stores now. Economy is tight. Councilman Bilella added, what are we as a group to help the process? When the economy gives, what can we do to entice future business, to identify opportunities and bring in future development? What incentives do we have? Our purpose is to assist the public and guide the government to bring businesses in. Rita mentioned that our town looks Retro in nature. We need uniformity, give the town a theme. Joe Adolf commented that we now have the façade ordinance in place, but we cannot force people to do it. Bob mentioned those buildings that were in bad shape that have been given a facelift, it's a start for the town. Rita asked how we can bring the key constituents in like home and school council, the Rotary club to get together and bring ideas and help the town. Berlin is surrounded by deteriorating towns like Pine Hill, Clementon, Lindenwold, and Sicklerville, they are all encroaching on our boundaries.

Rita suggested going to a Home and School Council meeting, a Senior Club meeting, Rotary club meeting to try and get people excited about cleaning up the town. Joe mentioned having something to get them excited, have something attractive. We had a plan to apply for a state grant, planner was going to apply for the grant, it was as 2 stage grant. The only condition was that the Planner that prepared the plan said the money needed to be used only with him, and Council turned him down. Rita suggested set 2 or 3 goals, and get the work done. Our main goal is to get new businesses in town. That may be resolved by joining the Chamber of Commerce. Rotary people are always looking for guest speakers, by reaching out to them maybe someone there would be interested in bringing business to Berlin. Rita challenged everyone on the board to bring a list to the next meeting. Joe will be dealing with the Chamber of Commerce. Rita asked for a list of small to medium sized businesses, we need board members to get a list. Joe suggested not to do a mass mailing, but do a quantity that we can follow up on the mailings. Joe will get a list from the Chamber. We need to target the type of business, and find out what their criteria is to be able to fulfill their needs.

Councilman Bilella asked if we can give Brian Slaugh a call, reach out to see if the grant is still available. Kevin commented that the Department of Community Affairs has grants available, or matching funds, but there are criteria that the Town must meet to qualify. You have to start with a vision or a plan, a theme. The beginning is the plan, then energize people so they know what

to be energized for. Rita commented that we need to be persistent. Get small groups to do things within the Boro. We need at least 2 goals and by the end of the year be able to say that we accomplished it. Debbie volunteered to make calls to towns to get their Mercantile lists. Joe mentioned Pine Hill, Clementon, and Lindenwold. Start with those towns. The purpose is to see if businesses want to relocate. Drew commented that we should contact businesses that are successful, in the Voorhees, Cherry Hill, Marlton or Hammonton instead of a smaller town that the business is failing. The smaller business maybe wont have the revenue. Councilman Maccaroni mentioned to get a list of vacant properties, put a letter together from the Economic Re-Development Committee to the owners. Classify the property, we know the stats on the property. Rita agreed. Debbie will check with Lisa in the Tax collectors office to gather information on the vacant properties and owner information.

Jim Knight discussed Billboards. He spoke with John Aducat, he is hunting right now, Jim will reach out to him when he gets back. We can put a banner on the Billboard, just like the Rotary club did. Gary Knight commented the banner should be a welcoming banner, inviting the businesses to Berlin. Councilman Bilella added that out 2 goals are to reach out to the businesses, and to get the banners. Councilman Bilella volunteered to draft the letter that will go out to the businesses. He will work with Rita on the letter. Rita asked why cant we be on tv, channel 19.??

Adjournment:

Jim Knight made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Councilman Jim Bilella seconded the motion. All members voted aye.

Respectfully Submitted,

Debbie Simone

Cc: Charleen Santora, RMC, Business Administrator