



## **Minutes: Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDC) May 19, 2025**

The regular meeting of the Middle Smithfield Township Economic Development Advisory Committee was held on May 19, 2025, with Ed Regina (Chairperson) presiding.

**Board Members:** Ed Regina (Chairperson), Joe Memoli, and Ashley Takacs attended in person. Gina Bertucci and Beverly Brown attended via Zoom.

**Absent:** Deborah Emin (Vice Chairperson) and Charlie Stecker.

**Township Staff:** James Brechbiel, Economic Development Manager, in person, and Annette Atkinson, Township Supervisor, via Zoom.

**Township Residents/Guests:** Danny Younger, Rick Porvaznik, and Michael Putney.

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 pm with Ed Regina presiding.

### **Minutes and Agenda**

- Gina Bertucci made a motion to approve the April Minutes, seconded by Joe Memoli. Motion passed 5-0.
- Joe Memoli made a motion to approve the May agenda. Ashley Takacs seconded the motion. Motion passed 5-0.

### **Correspondence**

- None

### **New Business:**

**Business Updates:** James Brechbiel reviewed the following updates for businesses in the area:

- JuJu's Vault had a soft opening on 5/3/25, and a grand opening date will be announced.
- Pocono Ridge Inn is setting up its final inspection with Zoning, and an opening date is expected.
- Plans for Phase II of Mt. Nebo Apartments with 30 additional units were submitted to the Township, and the Planning Commission is reviewing.

**Community/Township Updates:** James Brechbiel directed the committee to review the list of events at the bottom of agenda:

- Middle Smithfield Township was awarded for (2) grant applications submitted for the Monroe County LSA (Local Share Account) - \$75,000 for its application of the installation of pedestrian facilities and sidewalks with ADA cutouts, ADA-friendly automatic door openers, and Mosier's Dairy Farm's historical and educational installation at the Community and Cultural Center (CCC) and \$239,238 for the Wooddale Recreation Area and Road Department Expansion. The project is for the design and development of a new multi-use park, community space, and leaf compost recycling sub-center at the Township's 2nd Garage Location in Wooddale. The committee thanked all the elected officials and organizations that submitted letters of support for the Township.
- Middle Smithfield Township was awarded for (2) grant applications submitted to the Pocono Mountain Visitors Bureau (PMVB): \$4,000 for its Main Street Beautification that includes refacing the sewer pump stations and landscaping projects, and \$6,500 for its Tidy Town litter pick up and landscaping projects. The committee thanked the PMVB and the elected officials who provided letters of support.
- The Pocono Mountain Visitors Bureau (PMVB) Tourism Summit is Thursday, 5/22/25 from 8:00 am to 3:30 pm at Kalahari Resort. Members of the committee were invited to attend.
- Middle Smithfield Township is displaying banners for the victims of the Marshalls Creek Explosion for the 61st anniversary of the explosion on 6/26/25. The banners will be on 8 utility poles that align Route 209 at the site. The Township further plans to expand the memorial site with additional banners, landscaping around the Historical Marker, and markers on the memorial week in honor of the victims who lost their lives. The Township is submitting an application to the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce (GLVCC)'s Main Street Beautification Grant for the expansion of the memorial site and hopes to hear by the end of June, 2025, if it has been awarded.
- For the EDC initiative of booking Financial Literacy Seminars in 2025, the NeighborWorks Home Buyers Seminar is confirmed for Saturday, 11/1/25.

### **East Stroudsburg University (ESU) Economic Summit Feedback Discussion:**

- James Brechbiel noted the presentations showed overall conditions for the region were reported as solid, but continuing to show deceleration. The job market is cooling with 0% growth, and due to low supply and high demand, housing

prices are up. Permits issuance since 2021 has increased, meaning there is an appetite to build, which equates to 16% of home purchasing transactions.

- Gina Bertucci noted that a big impact on the region is the Hotel Tax. Out of the \$14.5 million collected for the Pocono Region (Monroe, Pike, Wayne, and Carbon Counties) in 2024, \$10.5 million was collected from Monroe County alone, and the revenue, although slightly declining from 2023, is higher than pre-pandemic levels.
- Joe Memoli noted that Homeowners Associations (HOA) like short-term rentals (STRs) because of the Hotel Tax generated, but aren't key on the other issues they bring.
- Ashley Takacs noted that the presentation by Airbnb stated that the company establishes set rules, such as curfews, a support number for surrounding neighbors, etc., to safeguard the communities they are established. The presentation did not clarify how public the information was disseminated or how proactive Airbnb was in promoting it to the areas where they are in operation.
- James B. shared that the presentation noted PA generated \$323 million (\$125 million in the Poconos alone) in neighborhood spending for Airbnb guests.
- Ed Regina noted that STRs have helped his business, as he finds owners invest more in landscaping for curb appeal.
- Annette Atkinson noted that vacationers dine out more than residents, which contributes significantly.
- The committee discussed that statistics showed 85% of Airbnb owners are the homeowners themselves and that they operate only (1). Beverly Brown noted that homeowners who faced inflation, longer commutes, higher taxes, etc. in the area found that the STR option was a way to not default on mortgages, etc., and saved them from financial hardship.

#### **Old Business:**

**Revitalize 209 Status Updates:** The Committee reviewed the following updates:

- **Pocono Café** was reimbursed \$9,500 for its paving project.
- **Jinyin Temple** – The Board of Supervisors (BOS) requested additional quotes from local contractors be submitted, and the temple noted it was working to retrieve those.
- **Richard's Tree Farm** received 4 out of 5 for its fencing project. The applicant noted they intend to submit an application once their busy season stabilizes.
- **House of 5027 Milford Rd.** noted, they have a second quote and are working on getting the last one to complete its application for the siding project.
- **Middle Smithfield Presbyterian** is submitting a Letter of Interest for its steeple repair project.

#### **Announcements:**

- None

#### **Public Comments:**

- Danny Younger gave a presentation to the committee and proposed making Fort Hyndshaw a federal monument in Middle Smithfield Township. Danny Y. requested that the committee submit a letter of support for the initiative. The committee discussed and agreed to have it for Danny Y. by or before its next committee meeting.

**Meeting adjournment:** Joe Memoli made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:02 p.m., seconded by Ashley Takacs. The motion passed 5-0.

The next meeting will be held on Monday, June 16, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. at the Township Municipal Center.

Respectfully Submitted,  
James Brechbiel, Middle Smithfield Township