



Minutes: Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDC) July 21, 2025

The regular meeting of the Middle Smithfield Township Economic Development Advisory Committee was held on July 21, 2025, with Ed Regina (Chairperson) presiding.

Board Members: Ed Regina (Chairperson), Deborah Emin (Vice Chairperson), Beverly Brown, and Charlie Stecker attended in person. Gina Bertucci and Ashley Takacs attended via Zoom.

Absent: Joe Memoli.

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

Township Residents/Guests: Michael Putney (resident) in person, and Samantha Ortiz (resident), Michael Coffey (Revitalize 209 Committee Member), Jeremy O'Neill (Placer AI), and Ryan Denisi (Placer AI) via Zoom.

The meeting was called to order at 5:32 pm with Ed Regina presiding.

Minutes and Agenda

- Deborah Emin made a motion to approve the June Minutes, seconded by Gina Bertucci. Motion passed 5-0. (Charlie Stecker was not present for action)
- Deborah Emin made a motion to approve the July agenda. Ashley Takacs seconded the motion. Motion passed 5-0. (Charlie Stecker was not present for action)

Correspondence

- Steve Ertle reached out to the Township to commend the committee on its Shop Local Christmas in July program, nothing how important it is to support local businesses (that's what he is all about) and how Mom n Pop businesses often don't know how to promote themselves, so the job the committee is doing is so great and important.

New Business:

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

- Pocono Ridge Inn's soft opening is expected for summer, 2025, and Charlie Stecker noted there is an on-site manager.
- 209 Blazin Grill has permits and is hoping to open in August/September of 2025.
- Big Ridge Self Storage – The developer submitted checks for permits and has an application for LERTA review.
- Mt. Nebo Plans being reviewed by the Middle Smithfield Planning Commission.

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

- Middle Smithfield Community Day is Saturday, 8/2/25, from 12p – 3p at Echo Lake Park.
- Middle Smithfield Township Memory Makers is Saturday, 8/9/25, at the Community and Cultural Center.
- Middle Smithfield is working with the Department of Community and Economic Development's Main Street Matters Grant Program to review projects. The application deadline is 8/31/25.

Placer.ai Demonstration:

- Ryan Denisi and Jeremy O'Neill conducted a presentation on Placer.ai, an analytics company that uses mobile device geolocation to give real-time use and data for any targeted area, analyzing foot traffic, audience demographics, comparable markets, and more.
- The committee asked how the platform gets insights, and it was noted that cell phone apps collect the data and require permission from their users. The platform reports segmenting upwards of 8% of the population, with algorithms accounting for the remaining portion, a method similar to that of the Nielsen Rating system for television viewership.
- The committee discussed how the Township can utilize the services and it was noted Parks/Rec and Community Development can use it to gauge public attendance/activity, Economic Development can use it for prospecting/business recruitment of companies that look for comparable demographics to that of the Township's, Public Works can use it for street traffic counts and prioritizing projects, stats for competitive grant writing can be gathered, etc.
- Ed Regina asked whether Placer.ai can show detailed visitor data, specifically which stores people visited in which plazas or locations, and at what particular times. The presenters confirmed that Placer.ai can provide that level of detail.
- Ashley Takacs asked Placer.ai to confirm how far back trends can be observed and the parameters for intellectual property rights, etc. Placer.ai confirmed that trends can be seen as far back as January 2018. Concerning intellectual

property, Placer.ai noted that when the Township provides insight on information it received from Placer.ai, it is the Township's intellectual property, but that the Township cannot directly pass information from Placer.ai to a third party.

- Gina Bertucci inquired about how to measure return on investment (ROI). Placer.ai noted that testimonials related to grant awards and sponsorship requests can be referenced as indicators. They added that the data obtained through the platform can also be used to identify and prospect companies seeking locations like Middle Smithfield to occupy vacant spaces within the Township. Gina B. noted that the feature for prospecting is extremely beneficial, and Beverly Brown added that the Township can have more oversight on tenants being attracted to the area.
- Deborah Emin asked about Placer.ai's carbon footprint. The presenters responded that they did not have that information available at the time. She also inquired about the company's location, and Placer.ai confirmed that its headquarters are in Tel Aviv, Israel, with additional offices in the United States. They clarified that all data is stored in the U.S. and backed up via Google Cloud.
- Deborah E. asked whether Placer AI works with the Israeli military, expressing concern about that possibility. The presenters stated that they do not provide data or geofencing services for military installations, schools, or hospitals. Deborah E. noted she has concerns regarding AI systems in general and that the Township should attempt to get at least three quotes in order to compare. Charlie Stecker noted the Township should consider an American-based company.
- The committee discussed that it sees value in a platform like Placer.ai and is interested in learning more about other programs like it.

Old Business:

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

- **Jinyin Temple's** Project was preliminarily approved by the BOS.
- **Richard's Tree Farm** was reviewed by the solicitor, and action by the BOS is expected for 7/24/25.
- Ed Regina asked the Revitalize 209 Committee to consider other ramifications when reviewing projects, such as plantings that could obstruct the line of sight.

Christmas in July Update:

- James Brechbiel noted that the stores were reporting success with promotions, such as The Kit and Cavoodle, who noted that they saw a huge uptick in customers, Yummy Kebab and JuJu's Vault, who noted they had new customers, and Los Tres Amigos, who noted its deal was very popular this time around.
- Pocono Santa Encounter discovered Shop Local through the Christmas in July campaign and is looking for opportunities to collaborate in the Holiday campaign.
- Additional stores submitted deals, bringing the total to 24 offers for the summer campaign.
- James B. encouraged EDC members to share, support, and engage in the campaign throughout the month.

Social Media Assistance to Small Businesses:

- James Brechbiel noted that he started the "Google My Business" project and asked the committee for its assistance in reviewing the Township's business presence.
- Ed Regina noted that he has a contact who would be willing to assist small businesses with their social media.

Announcements:

- None.

Public Comments:

- None

Meeting adjournment: Deborah Emin made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:59 p.m., seconded by Charlie Stecker. The motion passed 6-0.

The next meeting will be held on Monday, August 18, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. at the Township Municipal Center.

Respectfully Submitted,
James Brechbiel, Middle Smithfield Township