



**Minutes: Economic Development Advisory Committee      18 August 2015**

The regular meeting of the Middle Smithfield Township Economic Development Advisory Committee was held on August 18, 2015 at 6:30 pm at the Schoonover Municipal Building with Robert Hetu as Chairman presiding.

**Board Members:** Robert Hetu, Carl Wilgus, Gina Bertucci, Beverly Brown

**Township Staff:** Supervisor Annette Atkinson, Supervisor Michael Dwyer, and Judith Acosta as Liaison and Recording Secretary

Meeting started at 6:34pm with Robert Hetu as Chairman.

**Minutes and Agenda**

- Motion to accept & approve the minutes from the May 11, 2015 meeting was made by Carl Wilgus. Gina Bertucci seconded the motion. All members were in favor.
- Motion to accept & approve the Agenda for August 18, 2015 was made by Gina Bertucci. Robert Hetu seconded the motion. All members were in favor.

**Old Business.**

**LERTA Update - Mike Dwyer and Annette Atkinson**

- Carl Wilgus offered congratulations to the township and the Board of Supervisors for getting the LERTA passed for the entire Commercial and Industrial Zones..
- Annette Atkinson & Mike Dwyer offered an update on what transpired at the recent School Board meeting on July 20th and how we are able to now move forward with the LERTA program.
- All three taxing authorities are have passed the LERTA (Middle Smithfield Township, East Stroudsburg Area School District, and Monroe County)
- The agreement allows for a span of 10 years to apply for the LERTA in the LERTA zones. At the end of 10 years, Middle Smithfield Township would have to approach the School Board to re-adopt the LERTA.
- Annette Atkinson & Mike Dwyer thanked the EDC for their involvement and support in getting the LERTA passed by the school board and commissioners.
- The next step is to have the tax assessor's office coordinate with our zoning office for the submission of the LERTA applications.
- A letter is being sent to all commercial & industrial property owners (approximately 150-170) over the next week to provide updated information on the LERTA program. The properties in MST are now more desirable with the LERTA in place. The Supervisors asked the EDC for their help in getting the word out nd educating the property owners.

- The EDC commends Mike and Annette for all of their hard work. Mike Dwyer and Annette Atkinson offered his thanks to Parin Shah, Carl Wilgus, Chuck Leonard, Bob Philips and others who helped bring it to the table and involve others in their efforts.

### **Marketing Package for Realtors etc. update - subcommittee**

- Carl Wilgus is chairing the Marketing Package subcommittee.
- The subcommittee will meet again, hopefully in September, now that the LERTA is passed and reconvene the work on the Marketing Package for Realtors.
- Beverly Brown suggested we have the commercial realtors come to a meeting at the township building for a presentation on the LERTA program and how the zoning office can assist with any questions or concerns a prospective buyer may have. The EDC also plays a big role in how MST handles and supports new businesses and property owners. Beverly offered to help put this meeting together.
- Annette Atkinson shared the new Pocono Mountain Economic Development magazine, in which MST has an ad, and how we can utilize the magazine and the PMED program as well to bring in more businesses to MST.

### **PMRA Meeting**

- The Zoning Officer (Shawn McGlynn) along with Judy Acosta, Annette Atkinson and Beverly Brown presented at a recent meeting of the Pocono Mountain Realtor's Association on July 10th.
- Beverly Brown provided her observations from the meeting and found it to be very successful and positive. Many realtors in attendance were pleased to know the MST zoning office will assist with questions and concerns. Many also learned about the new LERTA program being offered in MST.
- We received business cards from all of the realtors in attendance. Beverly Brown is willing to contact all of them to find out if we can visit their local branch office and present to their colleagues; a few other commercial realtors were suggested such as Michael Baxter, Davis Chant, Wilkins, etc..

### **National Park Service Update - Carl Wilgus**

- Carl Wilgus offered the great news that the NPCA received the grant from the Penn Foundation of close to \$500,000.00 to launch the Geo-tourism project. This program will develop a map product and website and highlight the National Park in this area. This project will ultimately bring more business to the area.
- The National Geographic Society will take the lead on this project. Both Gina Bertucci and Carl Wilgus sit on the steering committee for this project, and will give the EDC periodic updates.
- They hope the project will be completed by May 2016 just in time for tourism for summer to begin and the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the NPS.

- Only 22 Geo-tourism projects exist world-wide and now we will be included in one of them.

### **Fall Event update – Robert Hetu**

- Robert Hetu explained that we lost momentum on this event due to summer vacations and while he would still like to do something to celebrate the new historical marker for the finding of the Mastodon, he feels time is pressing to get something done. Perhaps something on a smaller scale is in order.
- Gina Bertucci expressed that she liked the original idea of the scavenger hunt very much and perhaps we can do it another time such as the date the Mastodon was discovered in MST instead of focusing on Fossil Day.
- Annette Atkinson wondered if our efforts for the fall would be better spent on the Shop Local Holiday Shopping event and Basic Power (see more information on these items below), and we can do a mastodon scavenger hunt in 2016.
- Discussion will continue outside of this meeting with a solid decision made at the next meeting.

### **New Business.**

#### **Basic Power - Annette Atkinson & Mike Dwyer**

- Annette Atkinson introduced Basic Power as a great new business in MST, founded by an MST resident who is an inventor.
- Basic Power allows the consumer using the product to save, guaranteed, 11% off their electricity bill. Many, such as the township, are saving more. Marketing materials were handed out to the members.
- Basic Power is offering 10% off the MSRP of their product to any business in MST. They also offer the option to lease the product, so there is no cash outlay by the business. Consumers will see the savings off of their electricity bill and it will generally be more than the cost to lease the product.
- Mike Dwyer informed the EDC that the township is using the product at the main sewer plant and Winona plant and seeing a combined 16% overall savings which amounts to more than \$10,000 per year. We will be marketing this business to all other MST businesses starting in September with a press release, social media campaign and possible YouTube clips.
- MST hopes to not only assist Basic Power but all businesses in MST.

#### **Shop Local 2015 – Judy Acosta**

- The EDC needs to start working on this campaign now. This will be a major topic at the next EDC meeting per Robert Hetu's suggestion.

- We hope to grow more participation this year by both businesses and residents. We will take what we learned last year and improve the program.
- We agree there is a need for better tracking of the usage of the discount card. We will brainstorm ideas and Robert Hetu will research a possible scanning device to be used for tracking.

### **Economic Outlook Summit – Annette Atkinson**

- Annette Atkinson brought this meeting to the attention of the EDC. Carl Wilgus will be attending and introducing one of the keynote speakers.
- Annette Atkinson suggested that it may be a good idea for the EDC members to attend this meeting and offered that MST could secure a table for those who can attend. All thought this was a great idea and will email with their availability this week.

### **Improving the appearance of our Business Corridor: Sign Ordinance -**

- Annette shared and distributed copies of the Mid-Year report given this July and drew attention not only to the EDC section, but the Zoning section. Zoning has been very instrumental in cleaning up the look of the township and bringing property owners into compliance.
- Another thing Zoning accomplished is their review of the sign ordinance. The new sign ordinance is in its final stages. A public hearing is scheduled for September 24, 2015. The Supervisors requested EDC's help in educating business owners.
- Annette Atkinson & Mike Dwyer encouraged EDC members to attend the public hearing and show their support of the sign ordinance and offer their opinions on why it is so important to our township.
- Additional information will be offered at the next EDC meeting on September 14th.

### **Announcements**

- Memory Makers is this Saturday, 8/22 at 12pm (Shawnee Inn)

**The next meeting is scheduled for September 14th. Meeting adjourned at 7:44pm**