

**FLORENCE TOWNSHIP
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
(Reflecting February 1, 2022)

MEETING DATE/TIME: Tuesday, March 1, 2022 at 7:00 PM
Florence Township Municipal Complex
Front Conference Room (Virtual Meeting)
711 Broad Street
Florence, NJ 08518

1. CALL TO ORDER

2.

ROLL CALL	PRESENT	ABSENT	REMARKS
Katie Wittkamp	X		
Marvin Wainwright	X		
Joan Geary	X		
Rose Sullivan	X		
Joseph Bongiorno	X		
Richard Popso		X	
Councilman Nick Haas	X		
Bridget Wiese	X		
Mike Rinaldi	X		
Martin Eckert Jr.	X		

Quorum Present (7 Voting Members) Yes X No _____

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- A. Minutes from the meeting of December 7, 2021 were approved (Haas/Wittkamp)

4. CORRESPONDENCE, EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

- A. **Roebing Historical Society Scarecrows:** Marty Eckert shared that the tree lighting in Roebing returned last year after a long absence. The high school band along with various department and committee members joined residents along Main Street as the fire department escorted Santa to the circle on Main Street.

Brief speeches took place prior to the tree lighting and performance from the band. Investors Bank and the Florence Historical Society and Roebling Museum took part in sponsoring the event. The Florence Twp Police Department also held a clothing drive during the event.

- B. **Florence Twp Calendar:** Marty shared that the 2022 Florence Township Community Calendar has been distributed throughout the community by our local Boy Scout Troop. This year's calendar provides all pertinent township information along with pages of photos that capture memories of the towns 150 years.
- C. **Florence Township's 150th Anniversary - 2022:** Marty provided information about the township celebrating 150 years and depending on how things go with the Covid-19 pandemic the town is hopeful to have some events and activities for the community to enjoy. There will be a committee positioned to support these efforts and the school district along with local organizations will be welcome to participate pending circumstances.

5. COMMITTEES

- A. **Route 130 Corridor:** Mark Remsa provided information to the committee regarding the preparation of a visioning statement which will be designed to receive feedback from the community. The layout will be in the form of a survey and will contain several questions relating to potential approaches to the future economic development planning of the Florence Township community. The visioning statement will serve as a supporting document as the township works to complete the master plan. The goal will be to present the visioning statement for the public to view sometime in the next few weeks.

6. NEW BUSINESS

- A. **Former Nooks to be Tina's Tacos:** On social media there has been an alert that the former Nooks Restaurant/Bar is being reopened under new ownership as a future Tina's Tacos. Tina's Tacos is known in Pennsylvania as a restaurant and margarita bar. It is unknown at this time if they have acquired a liquor license or if any documentation has been submitted at this time to the township.
- B. **Weiss Development Purchases Nooks Plaza:** It has been reported that commercial developer, Weiss Development has acquired the plaza which houses the former Nooks location. Current tenants are Matakas Jiu Jitsu, AEON Fitness, Tina's Tacos (Soon to be) and the Dunkin Donuts at the front along Route 130. There has been no update to the space where the liquor store was located.

7. OLD BUSINESS

- A. **Florence Township Master Plan:** Mayor Wilkie provided that the Master Plan elements continue to be completed and reviewed. It is anticipated that the plan will undergo final review and be introduced in 2022. Mark Remsa provided information to the new committee members history on the townships master plan. The township planning board has worked on each element of the plan and anticipated completion prior to the start of 2022. Due to challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic and several large applications filed for planning board review, caused for some delay in completing section of the plan. The master plan is anticipated to be completed in 2022.
- B. **Tru Hilton:** Mayor Wilkie shared that the proposed hotel which would be located in the area behind Burger King and Wawa has not provided any additional information to the township. The last correspondence explained the increased cost and reduced availability of construction materials would delay the process indefinitely. The township public works department did however clean trash and debris that had accumulated on and along the property perimeter. It became an eyesore and at times trash left behind from truck parking along the road way blow onto the property and roadway.

8. MEETING OPEN FOR PUBLIC COMMENT & REPORT OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Marvin Wainwright – Shared that he has observed that Wawa locations in the region have added areas to accept more Diesel fuel pumps. Considering the limited space at the existing Wawa location on Route 130 he inquired if Wawa had inquired or considered that “Tru Hilton” parcel as a possible expansion of those services. To date the township has not received an inquiry from Wawa regarding the neighboring parcel.

Katie Wittkamp – Discussed with the committee ways to engage the public in sharing businesses and services that are located in Florence Township. The committee discussed the current welcome letter and township calendar that are sent to new residents. It was suggested that a business listing and flyers or coupons could be included creating more of a welcome packet.

Bridget Weiss – Bridget shared that in by providing resources to both existing and potential local business owners, we could stimulate activity on improvement & attract new businesses to town. Bridget provided that there are low interest loan programs and grants that may be used for renovations and improvements. She cited that the Burlington County Economic Loan program has less restrictions and may have the ability to support staffing needs and other things that other lending vehicles do not. It was suggested to follow up with Liz Verna at the County office of Economic Development for more information.

Marty Eckert – Shared that information such as grant or loan opportunities that are available thru the state or county may be added to the economic development tab on the new township website. Marty encouraged the committee to provide feedback as to any areas of the website that could benefit from information not yet present.

Mark Remsa – Shared with the committee a strategy for 2022 that would encourage the group to have more of a presence in the community. Mark requested that before our March meeting that members drive thru the township and identify commercial spaces that may be noted for further research. The committee will observe businesses or parcels that are currently not open for business; vacant land; properties that may need renovation or improvement, etc. Members are asked to report their findings to Marty and then Mark will create a database for us to all work from.

No members of the public were in attendance.

9. ADJOURNMENT – 8:10pm (Wittkamp/Weiss)