

**FLORENCE TOWNSHIP
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
(Reflecting February 7, 2023)

MEETING DATE/TIME: Tuesday, March 7, 2023 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		
Mike Rinaldi		X		
Lisa Filippine		X		
Melissa Bond		X		
Joseph Bongiorno			X	
Richard Popso			X	
Councilman Nick Haas		X		
Mark Remsa		X		
Martin Eckert Jr.		X		

Quorum Present (7 Voting Members) Yes X No _____

Welcome: Lisa Filippine and Melissa Bond to the 2023 Economic Development Committee

2A. Nomination of Chair/Vice Chair

Selections by Committee: Katie Wittkamp, Chair. Michael Rinaldi, Vice-Chair.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Minutes from the meeting of December 6, 2022 were approved (Geary/Wittkamp)

4. CORRESPONDENCE, EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

- A. **B&H Photo – Annual Employee Event:** Marty shared that he and members from the township attended the annual employee appreciation event at B&H Photo's location on Daniel's Way. It is a tremendous event recognizing the efforts of employees both individually and as a company. B&H executives provided that over 6 million packages were shipped from the Florence facility in 2022 with a 99.47 percent on time delivery. They identified each department from shipping & receiving to general building maintenance lauding the efforts and reinforcing that all success is derived from the team atmosphere approach. It was a very nice event which was attended by over 1,200 employees and guests.
- B. **New Parttime Communications Manager:** Marty shared that the township has hired a parttime communications manager tasked with handling updates to the municipal website and social media platforms. Jim Ford has taken the role to support the dissemination of information to the public and has expanded the towns social media footprint by developing both Instagram and Twitter accounts. Jim will also handle the preparation of the weekly press release publication. An additional facet to his role is to manage the day-to-day operations and scheduling of the Florence Township Community Center.

5. COMMITTEES

- A. **Small Business Sub-Committee:** Mark Remsa shared that he has taken time to drive most of the township identifying various parcels and buildings that are presently vacant or not in operation. Mark will identify owners of record and begin the process of inquiring as to the owners' objectives for the properties. The township and committee's goals are for these properties to qualify for redevelopment. This would create incentives to take action on remediating or possibly marketing the properties to be sold or leased to interested parties. Some larger properties or strip of stores could be redeveloped as an attractive project for developers.

6. NEW BUSINESS

- A. **Roebling Steel Site - RFP:** An Rfp was placed to determine interest from prospective developers. To date there have not been responses to the rfp. The township will discuss further the language associated with the current rfp and look into other any additional information that may be included and other ways to promote the site.

The DVRPC is doing a high-level market analysis identifying the current trends for housing/retail/industrial space in the area. This analysis will provide council input as to how Roebling/Florence fit into the current regional development.

- B. Pilot Presentation:** Mayor Wilkie shared that in 2020, he had held a presentation geared towards explaining Pilots (Payment In Lieu of Taxes). The presentation described how Pilots function and their value in local municipalities, the county and region to support maintaining and growth of commerce in New Jersey. Mayor Wilkie plans to reintroduce the pilot presentation this year as a means to recommunicate information about pilot programs to the public.
- C. Truck Traffic – River Road:** Mayor Wilkie shared that the township has ongoing discussion relating to truck traffic on county roadways in the township. A Bypass placement from River Road would support alleviating traffic from the existing warehouses and will further support this objective to offset the potential increase due to further development along River Road.
- D. Bonduelle:** Bonduelle Fresh Americas (Ready Pac Foods) has informed the township that they will be ceasing processing in the Florence facility and will direct those processes to their Swedesboro location. The facility will move forward as a distribution hub. This change will have an effect of hundreds of jobs at the facility. Employees will have the opportunity to transfer to the Swedesboro location. This change will also have an effect of the volume of water utilized by the facility. The amount generated thru Bonduelle accounts for a large portion of our billable water service in the township which has supported low water bills for residents. This reduction in use by Bonduelle will create an increase in the quarterly cost of water in the township. There are questions concerning the distribution use and what impact it would have on traffic in and out of the facility. Mark Remsa suggested a traffic impact study be taken to better understand that potential impact to local roadways.
- E. Main Street Roebling:** When the Village of Roebling was developed it was at a time when households typically had zero to one vehicle and many residents walked to work, primarily at the Roebling Steel Mill. Street and alley designs were consistent with use during that time. In the years following, residents began owning more than one vehicle and parking became challenging in the village. The township considered creating parking options along Main Street, however designs would interfere with some of the historic nature of the area. One consideration included the lot which currently holds the Roebling Post Office. The Post Office is a hub to collect mail and then transport to Bordentown, therefore delivery is not handled from this location. If in the future there became another location to house postal services, then the corner could be repurposed to become a parking lot. Some communities in South Jersey have worked with the Postal Service to relocate office locations to smaller spaces and this could be a potential option to consider in the future.

- F. Economic Business Meeting:** Prior to Covid-19 there were discussions to host a local economic meeting for businesses. Mark Remsa and Katie Wittkamp will be looking at either a local chamber or business association to host a meeting in Florence Twp.

7. OLD BUSINESS

- A. Vacant Business Properties:** Discussed under small business sub-committee portion by mark Remsa.

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

No members of public present.

9. ADJOURNMENT – 8:09pm (Rinaldi/Geary)