

## **Florence Twp Economic Development Committee Minutes 10/3/23**

Florence, New Jersey

The Florence Township Economic Development Committee held a regular meeting on the above date in the header at the Municipal Complex, 711 Broad Street, Florence, New Jersey. Members of the public were invited to attend the meeting in person. The minutes reflect the meeting held on Tuesday, September 5, 2023.

The meeting was called to order by Economic Development Chair, Katie Wittkamp at 7:00 p.m.

### **ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS**

Upon roll call the following were found to be present:

Present: Katie Wittkamp, Marvin Wainwright, Lisa Filippine, Mike Rinaldi, Melissa Bond, Joseph Bongiorno, Richard Popso, Councilman Nick Haas

Also Present: Mayor Craig H. Wilkie, Martin Eckert Jr.

Absent : Joan Geary

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- Regular Meeting of May 2, 2023

Motion of Haas, seconded by Bond to approve the minutes as submitted.

### **COORDINATORS REPORT**

- **Community Carnival:** Marty shared that the township carnival returned in May and was again a very successful event. The favorable weather brought solid crowds and police and ems supported the event, where no incidents or injuries were reported. Mayor Wilkie shared that the township commits time and financial support to this event as it is a positive opportunity for the community to gather. Various local organizations participate and the ride company reported that the carnival staff was appreciative for how welcoming Florence residents and businesses are to their employees. Florence local businesses experience a spike in activity while the carnival is in town. They regularly patronize our local establishments daily.
- **Patriotic Celebration:** The annual patriotic celebration continues to be a great success. Several businesses, organizations and civic groups take part in the festivities of the day. The weather reports offered concerning inbound weather, however Florence Township did not experience rain and all activities took place without interruption. Police and fire department personnel reported no incidents or injuries.
- **National Night Out:** Marty shared that the Florence Township Police department hosted an excellent National Night Out event, which was supported by the fire department and dozens of local businesses and organizations. This event is a wonderful annual community outreach activity bringing a large population of the community together. A Blackhawk helicopter landed as an added attraction that brought a lot of excitement to all.

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### COMMITTEES

- No new committee information reported at time of meeting.

### CORRESPONDENCE, EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

- **Local Business Networking Event:** Katie Wittkamp and Marty Eckert provided a recap to the local networking event that was held on Monday, May 15<sup>th</sup>. Information booths were set up and presenters from the Burlington County Regional Chamber of Commerce, Rutgers Small Business Development Center, Burlington County Bridge Commission, Citizens Bank and the New Jersey Business Action Center. Information, links and contacts of each were posted on the townships social media and website to provide resources to anyone that was unable to attend.

### NEW BUSINESS

- **Burlington-Mercer Chamber of Commerce – Spring Street Fair:** Mayor Wilkie shared that representatives from the chamber met with the township to propose an opportunity to hold a spring fair in Florence Township. The group provided that for over 40 years this event was held in Bordentown, however the proposal was not approved to continue in 2024. The group discussed the potential use of the Roebling museum grounds and how the layout and management of the fair would work well at a site that is located near the New Jersey Transit Riverline. The discussion covered much of what had been in place over the 40 years it had run. The next step by the group was set to be a meeting with the Roebling Museum very soon. More details will follow should the Roebling Museum move forward to host the event.
- **B-Unos:** The committee discussed the opening of B-Unos over the summer. They occupy the space that was formerly Nooks Pourhouse and Tina's Tacos. It appears that they are doing well and have been well received by the community based on the activity of postings on local social media pages. They currently have locations in Burlington City and Mount Holly, but this new space is the largest they will have to date and have secured a liquor license to keep the bar area open.
- **Subculture Artisan Ales :** This venue opened during the Spring of 2023. Members of the committee shared that it is a very nice location and looks to be catching on with visitors from the area.
- **Victor Robbins – Keating Building, Hornberger Avenue:** Mayor Wilkie shared that a large custom cabinetry operation has occupied space in the Keatings Building. They manufacture high end cabinets and transport from the location to clients, many of which are located in New York. Most days the garage doors are open, but very little sound exits, thus seeming to be a relatively quiet process.
- **Reasonable Realty:** A real estate office has opened on Main Street in Roebling at the site of the former Roebling Bank. This use fits well with the neighborhood with street parking located in the front of the property.

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- **Former 84 Lumber:** The committee discussed that renovations to the property continue and the end use will be a truck repair facility. There are some delays due to the property owner awaiting DOT approval for the entrance/exit area of the property.
- **Staffing Agency:** A new staffing agency has opened on Route 130 just behind Dunkin Donuts. There looks to be renovation work going on at the other vacant spaces in the plaza, so we look forward to further businesses filling those spots.
- **Wilkie Park:** A parking lot expansion project has started at the park which will create additional spaces and an adjustment to the entrance area. Project is anticipated to be completed in the early fall. This will further support use of the park and a future renovation to the existing tennis courts where they will be re-surfaced and will be designed to accommodate both tennis and pickleball.
- **Florence Library:** The Florence Library parking lot is slated to be done this year.
- **Municipal Complex Playground:** Mayor Wilkie shared that a new playground will be placed at the municipal complex as an upgrade to the existing playground located nearest to W 6<sup>th</sup> Street. This playground will be situated to accommodate multiple age levels and will have handicap accessible equipment.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

- **Small Business Interviews:** Marty has continued to meet with local businesses and place periodic local business spotlights on the township website and social media. Mayor Wilkie encouraged members to visit local businesses and engage in conversation. Members may take information and report to Marty or inquire with a local business if they would be interested in being interviewed as a spotlight business and let Marty know and he will assist.
- **Vacant Business Properties:** Mark Remsa will be following up with the committee regarding work done to date about identifying vacant properties. More information to be provided. Over the summer Mark walked several streets in the community identifying properties that were not currently in an active use. He will be reaching out to property owners to understand their plans for the property, where the township will have an understanding of its potential future and if they plan to revitalize, rent or look to sell.
- **DVRPC Report:** Mayor Wilkie shared that the DVRPC completed a market study that provides detail information associated with large parcels that have undergone redevelopment. The analysis covers a wide range of topics and further explains end uses that may be considered and how a potential use may fit into the demographics of the area. The former Roebbing Steel Mill site was a part of the study and representatives will be providing the contents of the analysis, which will be shared on the township website and social media platform. Additionally, there will be a presentation at an upcoming council meeting in September (20<sup>th</sup>), which will further provide information as to the analysis. Councilman Haas shared that this analysis will be of value when considering opportunities in the future for the site.

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### **MEETING OPEN FOR PUBLIC COMMENT:**

No members of public present.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion of Popso, seconded by Wittkamp – 7:55pm