

**MINUTES
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
TOWNSHIP OF MONROE
JANUARY 7, 2021**

CALL TO ORDER

By way of electronic communication/live streaming, the Economic Development Commission meeting of the Township of Monroe was called to order by Secretary Jennifer Ballard at 8:30pm. Adequate notice of this meeting was given as required by the annual notice of meetings.

SALUTE TO THE FLAG

Secretary Jennifer Ballard led the Commission in the salute to our flag.

ROLL CALL

Present: Richard Coe, Christine Feggans, Brian McBride, Michael Mellace, Daniel Ryan, Janet Schaefer, Peter Sideris, Steven Slotnick, Thomas Swartz, Chelsea Valcourt

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Steven Slotnick made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted of the Economic Development Commission Meeting of December 21, 2020. The motion was seconded by Daniel Ryan; all in favor.

NOMINATIONS FOR 2021 REORGANIZATION OF COMMISSION

Daniel Ryan made a motion to open nominations for Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson. The motion was seconded by Thomas Swartz.

Michael Mellace made a motion to open nominations for Chairperson. The motion was seconded by Christine Feggans.

Peter Sideris nominated Michael Mellace for Chairperson of the Commission. The nomination was seconded by Steven Slotnick.

With no other votes for Chairperson, a roll call vote was taken and Michael Mellace is the new Economic Development Commission Chairperson.

Thomas Swartz made a motion to open nominations for Vice-Chairperson. The motion was seconded by Steven Slotnick.

Steven Slotnick nominated Christine Feggans for Vice-Chairperson of the Commission. The nomination was seconded by Thomas Swartz.

Michael Mellace nominated Richard Coe for Vice-Chairperson of the Commission. The nomination was seconded by Daniel Ryan.

Michael Mellace made a motion to close nominations for Vice-Chairperson. The motion was seconded by Daniel Ryan.

With no other votes for Vice-Chairperson, a roll call vote was taken for Christine Feggans and for Richard Coe and Richard Coe is the new Economic Development Vice-Chairperson.

Daniel Ryan made a motion to close nominations for Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson. The motion was seconded by Thomas Swartz.

CORRESPONDENCE, REPORTS AND OTHER MATTERS

Michael Mellace addressed the Commission after being selected as Chairperson:

“I would first like to thank everyone for voting me as Chairperson.

Today, we embark upon a new year for the Economic Development Commission. We are comprised of a full board of 9 members, each fully committed to enhancing the business climate in the Township of Monroe. This Commission is charged with duties which exceed simply breaking ground on new commercial ratables. As such, let the success of this commission not be judged solely on new commercial development, but to the objectives that we fulfill which that will serve our existing business owners, business owners who are yet to open in Monroe, as well as promoting the many empty store fronts which we see scattered throughout Monroe, so that they can be filled with a new generation of successful businesses.

In order for this commission to successfully discharge our duties, we must be honest with ourselves in not only the current economic climate throughout the country, but the climate in our own Town. We must also understand the struggles of the current business owners - the small mom and pop shops who have invested their life savings into opening businesses here in Monroe, and are struggling and on the verge of collapse. This is a critical time in which we must be providing them any form of support which we can, and to help them get a lifeline, which they so desperately need.

Commissions before us had requested the hiring of an Economic Development Consultant to assist this Commission with duties which volunteers could not fulfill on their own, in particular new commercial development. This commission now has at its disposal a part time Consultant who has been tasked with such duties. It is therefore imperative that both the Commission and the Consultant work together in an open, cooperative, and productive manner which will serve to enhance everyone’s efforts, and neither compete with, nor duplicate, those efforts.

This commission currently has no budget and is therefore limited in our ability to accomplish certain goals. For that reason, I will be requesting that the new Council approve a budget for us. Until that time, this Commission will do everything that we can without a budget. Economic Development in any Town is one of the top ways for a Town to reduce the tax burden on taxpayers. Commercial ratables pay a higher tax rate, all while typically having less of a financial burden on a Town’s budget. A commercial ratable uses less services of first responders, less public works by providing their own trash and snow removal, and does not add children to a school district. Therefore, I believe that creating a budget for economic development is one of the biggest investments a Town can make in itself. We have to look no further than a Trolley tour that was done years ago, and the tens of thousand of dollars that were generated in free advertising revenue, in order to see how a Town’s investment into economic development quickly multiplies.

In order to promote economic development, we must understand the economy of the Town. We must properly understand what money is bleeding out of Monroe, and where our residents are going to make their purchases. We must understand this not only where the borders of Monroe touch Washington and Gloucester Townships, but for all the borders Monroe touches. Only when we truly understand our bleed, can we truly concentrate our efforts on what Monroe should invest its efforts to attract.

Just like a salesperson gives out a business card to a prospective client, new prospects interested in opening in Monroe, regardless of size, should be provided with basic information about Monroe which shows our competitive strengths. These new prospects should also be provided with routine information that they will need in order to quickly facilitate their endeavors, such as general applications, rules and a directory of who to call for specific types of questions. Much of this information should also be provided in some form to every current business owner in Monroe.

In order for this Commission to most effectively serve Monroe, I am immediately creating the following 5 sub-committees.

1. Budget Committee – This committee shall be create an initial one year budget for calendar year 2021. Upon completion, this budget shall be completed and submitted to the budget chair of Council for consideration.
2. Outreach, Support & Training Committee – This committee shall begin with the following tasks:
 - a. Create a directory of every business within the Township of Monroe. This directory shall include such basic information as the business name, address, type of business, telephone number and email address.
 - b. Upon completion of this directory, a survey should be conducted of each business to determine which types of goods and services they provide. This completed directory will be made available not only to residents, but also to all persons in a purchasing capacity in the various forms of governmental entities in Monroe. This is to encourage the Town’s various governmental entities to financially support these businesses, when financial prudent.
 - c. The contact information included in the completed directory will be used to immediately inform the businesses of pertinent information, such as training opportunities, loan & financial information, and other time sensitive items passed down from other economic development resources.
 - d. This committee shall also be tasked with recommending any events which may promote businesses as a whole in Monroe.
3. Township Code Review Committee – This committee shall be charged with utilizing recommendations both from their own experiences and public input, in order to review the Township Codes and ordinances which may need to need to be changed in order to facilitate a more productive business climate.
4. Commercial Development & Occupancy Committee –
 - a. This Committee shall seek the input of both commercial developers and commercial real estate brokers in order to determine what they believe would make Monroe more attractive to develop new commercial properties in.
 - b. This committee shall also develop ways to promote marketing efforts that will lead to existing empty commercial space being occupied.
 - c. This committee shall also evaluate the “search available properties” section of the Town’s official website and determine the completeness of this section.
5. Main-Street event committee:
 - a. This committee shall be dedicated to creating events on main street which will facilitate a high volume of foot traffic during these events. These events should be designed not only to promote the main street area on the dates of specific events, but to also foster more daily utilization of this area.
 - b. This committee shall receive input of the local main street business owners through meetings, surveys and any other forum the committee deems appropriate. It is imperative that the business owners in this area are overall supportive of the efforts of this committee.
 - c. This committee shall work directly with Parks & Rec and other appropriate Township offices to develop these events.
 - d. All developed events will be presented to The Commission.

Tomorrow, I will also be e-mailing the Mayor and President of Council and requesting a joint meeting to discuss the EDC. I will also be requesting that each member of the EDC be provided with a Township issued e-mail address. I will also be inviting the Township solicitor to attend our next meeting.

I am appointing the following members to the previously mentioned sub-committees. The first person mentioned will lead the committee. These are only the initial members, and other members or members of the public may be added at the next EDC meeting in January or thereafter.

Budget Committee –Brian McBride, Michael Mellace
Outreach, Support & Training Committee – Michael Mellace, Janet Schaeffer, Christine Feggans
Township Code Review Committee – Richard Coe, Steve Slotnick, Tom Schwartz, member of the public Richard Sanford.
Commercial Development & Occupancy Committee – Peter Sideris
Main-Street event committee – Christine Feggans, member of the public Alan Dodd”

Daniel Ryan made a motion to approve Resolution EDC/R:01-21. The motion was seconded by Christine Feggans.

PUBLIC PORTION

Peter Sideris made a motion to open the Public Portion. The motion was seconded by Thomas Swartz and unanimously approved by all members of the Commission in attendance.

1. Alan Dodd introduced himself as a member of Parks & Rec. He is excited to be working with the Commission and is looking forward to working with the Main Street Committee.
2. Chelsea Valcourt introduced herself as the council liaison. She is the Ward 4 Councilperson and is excited to be working with the EDC and the businesses in town. She has requested that if the Commission needs any help from the Township to please reach out to her.
3. Chris Gorham asked the Commission how much of a budget they would be requesting. Michael Mellace responded saying that quotes will need to be obtained first and then the Commission will be asking for funds that would help achieve their goals and objectives. At this time, there is no calculated number.
4. Patrick McDevitt asked if the Chamber of Commerce was still in effect and if so, would the Commission be collaborating with them. Michael Mellace responded that the EDC is an independent board and will not be coordinating with them for events, etc. Steven Slotnick responded that the Chamber of Commerce is still operating and their next meeting is January 19, 2021. *During this discussion, the zoom feed was interrupted and no audio was available.*
5. Kristen & Julian Salgado from the Grindstone spoke. They congratulated Mike on being Chairperson and Julian stated that this gives him a renewed sense of hope. Kristen stated that she has a group together that is interested in helping all of Monroe businesses and that she would contact Mike later with more information. Kristen asked if the EDC Consultant was invited to the meeting. Michael Mellace stated that he was unaware if she was on the e-mail chain, but that the meeting was advertised appropriately, and that he would be inviting her to all future meetings. Michael also stated that he would be contact with Shannon tomorrow to schedule a meeting with her.

At this time, the zoom feed returned and the audio was back. Richard Coe made a motion to close the Public Portion. The motion was seconded by Steven Slotnick and unanimously approved by all members of the Commission in attendance.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, Chairperson Michael Mellace asked for a motion to adjourn. Richard Coe made a motion to adjourn the Monroe Township Economic Development Commission Meeting of January 7, 2020. The motion was seconded by Peter Sideris; all in favor. Meeting adjourned at 9:08pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Ballard, Secretary

The next scheduled Monroe Township Economic Development Commission meeting is January 25, 2021 at 7:00pm by way of electronic communication/live streaming.

These minutes were prepared from excerpts of the tape-recorded proceedings of the Economic Development Commission Meeting of January 7, 2020 and serve as only a synopsis of the proceedings.

Approved as submitted _____ Date _____

Approved as corrected _____ Date _____