

**MINUTES
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
TOWNSHIP OF MONROE
NOVEMBER 16, 2020**

CALL TO ORDER

The Regular Meeting of the Monroe Township Economic Development Commission was called to order by Chairperson Steven Slotnick at 7:03pm in the Court Room of the Municipal Complex. Adequate notice of this meeting was given as required by the annual notice of meetings.

SALUTE TO THE FLAG

Chairperson Steven Slotnick led the Commission in the salute to our flag.

ROLL CALL

Present: Richard Coe, Christine Feggans, Michael Mellace, Daniel Ryan, Peter Sideris, Steven Slotnick, Thomas Swartz, Cncl. Katherine Falcone

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

There were no prior minutes that needed to be approved.

CORRESPONDENCE, REPORTS AND OTHER MATTERS

Chapter 26 of the Code Book for Monroe Township is designated to the Economic Development Commission. Daniel read the duties of the Commission and each were discussed in detail.

A. Prepare a commercial use survey and inventory for the Township of Monroe to monitor commercial uses and commercial tax ratables and to attract and assist businesses which are appropriate and will be a contributing part of the Township of Monroe.

-Members of the previous board know of studies that were conducted in 2018 relating to types of businesses in town, but no one is sure where those documents are. The previous chairperson was in charge of keeping the information.

B. Develop and maintain a perpetual inventory of available vacant or underutilized commercial properties, including property that could be used for economic development according to its adaptability to various types of business, professional and industrial enterprises.

-Christine believes that this is something that the previous commission had worked on. New member, Peter Sideris, has owned 14 businesses throughout the years and is currently a realtor. Peter has prepared a list of commercial properties, buildings and land, and handed the list out to all members. Peter is currently working with multiple businesses that are looking to come to town, including a bakery, a body shop and an indoor motorcycle arena. Katherine mentioned that the website shows available properties in town and it is updated regularly. It was discussed that Peter could work with Shannon to make the list more inclusive.

C. Coordinate efforts with county and state economic development agencies, as well as any regional, federal or private agencies, in an attempt to foster and perpetuate a positive commercial economic environment for the Township of Monroe.

-Christine said that the previous commission went to conferences and had guests come and speak to the commission regarding things that were happening in the state. Richard mentioned that he thought this duty was important and that being in contact with the county would be important to get new business in our town.

-Michael said that he thought it would be important to have a relationship with the New Jersey Economic Development Authority. The Authority makes different studies and grants available to support businesses in the state. Katherine has been in contact with the New Jersey Economic Development Authority weekly. She also discussed grants that they offered due to covid-19. Mike thinks that the information should be relayed to the public better, perhaps by getting a list of businesses and obtaining emails and phone numbers so that the commission can communicate with the businesses, because information being relayed at council meetings is not sufficient.

D. Assist Township Administration and/or Township Council, if requested, in the preparation of applications for any grants or funding which would help facilitate efforts and to research the availability of such grants or funding.

-Previous members did acknowledge that council and the Mayor had a relationship with the commission. Michael suggested that the Township start up a grant steering committee that would search for grants that the Township can apply for. Michael would be willing to assist the committee. A project for a drive thru zoo was discussed.

E. Coordinate with the Small Business Administration and any other federal, state or local agencies which assist or promote business and commerce in order to enable the Commission to give guidance and information to businesses which desire to start up or relocate in the Township of Monroe.

F. To encourage expansion of existing industry and business to the best interest to the Township of Monroe.

-Richard brought up a past practice that he thought was successful, which was the Spotlight on Business. The Spotlight essentially created a partnership between council, the Mayor and the business. The business was invited to come and describe their business and shows off their successes. This created an advantage for the business that the spotlight was on because the presentation was televised and also reported in The Sun.

G. To prepare, develop and distribute advertising material and data listing the advantages, opportunities and availability of real estate in the Township of Monroe and encourage and accomplish business, industrial and professional settlement within the Township.

-In the past, a trolley tour was offered to contractors and developers. On the tour, they were given tote bags, showed the best parts of town and also provided lunch. No one is aware of any business that resulted from the tour.

-Daniel also brought up the project with Rowan University. Students at Rowan University in a project based learning program would do things for the town such as advertising and marketing. The students would be earning class credits for their work and it would be free for the town. The project could be used for a feasibility study, or it could be tailored to anything that the Township would see fit. Clayton utilized this program and it was effective for them. At this time, the deadline has passed, but the opportunity is still available and would need to be applied for. Richard thought this would be a great idea as it could greatly benefit the town and would not cost anything.

-Michael said that we should be supporting and complimenting Shannon and not competing with her.

H. Confer with the Township Administration, Township Council, Planning Board and other municipal agencies as necessary concerning land use issues, ordinances and resolutions that may have an impact upon commercial and industrial retail use in the Township.

-Richard suggested that there are things in the land use code that can be clarified and reclassified so that applicants can get through the process quickly and without unnecessary costs.

-The Redevelopment Committee meets with businesses and paid professionals. Tom suggested that representation from the Planning and Zoning boards should be present at those meetings in an attempt to provide clarification of the process once a business decides to come to town.

-Michael suggested that the commission host a meeting/open house where developers are invited to see what issues they are having with the planning and zoning process and to learn from them. An invitation could also be extended to the Pinelands and they could tell us what is allowed in town and what is not. A meeting like this doesn't require a budget and doesn't cost anything, but would provide beneficial information.

I. The Commission shall prepare a quarterly report to the Mayor and Township Council setting forth, in detail, its operations and transactions for the preceding three months. The Commission shall keep complete and accurate records of its accounts and shall not exceed its budget, and monies received from the Township of Monroe shall be expended only for the purposes for which they have been appropriated.

-The commission needs to work on getting a budget set up.

Shannon gave a report on her recent work and businesses that will be entering the town:

-The Botanist will be a marijuana dispensary near Sam's Club. The Township has worked out a deal that 2% of the gross revenue will go directly to the Township and will be used to help stabilize taxes.

-Monroe Mansion will be an assisted living complex near Antony & Cleopatra Caterers with commercial and medical facilities.

-Lidl is a supermarket similar to Aldi that will be going near First Bank.

-The Best Western is renovating and expanding.

-There will be an off-road riding facility in the CVS shopping center.

-Great Railings will be expanding.

-There will be a funeral home/gathering facility going on the Black Horse Pike.

-The biggest project that she worked on was the new website.

A discussion was held on what the commission can do to help Shannon. She responded that the most helpful thing would be for the initial connection to be made between herself and the developer. After the initial meeting, the developer does their own research and Shannon directs them to the planner.

There was a discussion regarding the conflict section of Chapter 26. Katherine will be discussing this with the Township Solicitor to be sure that the livelihood of members of the commission is not affected by being a volunteer member of the commission.

Michael reported that the businesses on Main Street are in the process of forming an association and that they have some concerns:

-They want to revitalize commercial buildings that are vacant.

-They want to see zoning and housing issues enforced, but they feel that they shouldn't have to write out complaints because the issues are obvious and should be seen by officials.

-They would also like to see events on Main Street such as a 1st Friday event.

Katherine reported that the business owners have had meetings with herself, the mayor, other members of council and Shannon and their concerns have tried to be addressed, but their meetings have been cancelled and their suggestions have ~~been refused~~. not been considered.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, Chairperson Steven Slotnick asked for a motion to adjourn. Christine Feggans made a motion to adjourn the Monroe Township Economic Development Commission Meeting of November 16, 2020. The motion was seconded by Michael Mellace; all in favor. Meeting adjourned at 10:04pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Ballard, Secretary

The next scheduled Monroe Township Economic Development Commission meeting is December 21, 2020 at 7:00 pm.

These minutes were prepared from excerpts of the tape-recorded proceedings of the Economic Development Commission Meeting of November 16, 2020 and serve as only a synopsis of the proceedings.

Approved as submitted _____ Date _____
Approved as corrected Jennifer Ballard Date 12/21/20