

MONTGOMERY TOWNSHIP BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP
MEETING MINUTES
April 20, 2021

The monthly meeting of the Montgomery Township Business Development Partnership (BDP) was held at 8:30 A.M. using the virtual meeting platform, TEAMS. The members of the BDP in attendance included JP Northrop (acting Chair), Allen Nappen, Bob Cole, Mary Griffith-Alfarano, Jay Haenn, and Gwyn Karpf. Also present was Candyce Fleuhr Chimera, Board of Supervisors' liaison to the Committee, Carolyn McCreary, Township Manager, Marianne McConnell, Deputy Zoning Officer and Derek Muller, Public Information Coordinator.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 8:35 a.m. with Mr. Northrop noting Lisa Martin, Chair was unable to attend.

Minutes: The minutes for the March 16th meeting had been previously circulated for review and approval.

Old Business: None

New Business: As has been past practice, each Committee member provided an update on their business operations and any issues they are continuing to deal with because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Haenn (Lansdale Chrysler Dodge Jeep) stated it has been a difficult month with the employees being sick with the new variant of COVID, resulting in his service department being shut down for two weeks. He also spoke about difficulties with acquiring new inventory because of plants being shut down.

Mr. Nappen (Nappen & Associates) stated he is dealing with inventory issues because of delays and shortages in microchip manufacturing. He also noted fleet sales are down and commented on rental car agencies experiencing shortages in vehicles available for rent.

Mr. Cole (Worldwide Stereo) stated his business continues to be strong particularly the retail portion with e-commerce lagging a bit now that consumers are getting more comfortable coming into the showrooms. He noted everything is coming in late and his installations are booked out two months and he has just hired five really good people.

Ms. Fleuhr Chimera stated this sellers' market in real estate continues to be amazing and like nothing she has ever experienced in her career. She indicated many people moving already have a home in mind, and are either downsizing to their desired retirement location or upsizing to accommodate a growing family. She noted typically she has 20-25 listings in a normal spring and currently has five. She also noted that contrary to what some believed it is local people who are moving versus residents in the city looking to relocate.

Derek Muller introduced himself to the group, stating he has replaced Kelsey Whalen as the Public Information Coordinator, having previously served as the Parks & Recreation Program Director. Ms. McCreary noted Derek will be attending the meetings going forward and serve as the staff liaison.

Ms. Karpf (Simon Properties) stated the mall continues to hold its own with Easter bringing a lot of people out to shop in person. She noted Outback Steakhouse (formerly TGI Friday's) is expected to open on August 13th. She also indicated the mall is aggressively looking to bring in new and exciting tenants to join the other stores.

Ms. McConnell stated the Planning & Zoning Department continues to be busy with residential activity, noting people continue to make improvements or put on additions to their homes, including pools, outdoor entertainment areas. She noted the department processed 30 pool permit applications in 2020 and so far this year they've already received 15 applications.

Ms. Griffith-Alfarano (Fulton Bank) reported the bank is slowly returning to in-person operations with some remote workers going back after Labor Day, some being hybrid, and some remaining remote. He spoke about the slow rise in fixed rates and refinancing of commercial paper. She noted mortgage originators are extremely busy. She stated they typically do \$20-\$25 million in a year and last year processed \$45 million. She reminded everyone that Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans are still available through May 31st, the Small Business Administration (SBA) has additional funding available, and Montco Strong grants are still available. She stated local bars and hospitality establishments have received \$20,000 to \$25,000. She advised the group that the Chamber of Commerce's golf outing is almost sold out.

Mr. Northrop (Edward Jones) stated his firm is staying conservative concerning opening the doors, doing so only for clients who cannot do virtual meetings. He spoke about the stock market, noting the J&J vaccine being paused has not affected it even though some feared it would. He indicated a lot of investment is going into the market right now and he doesn't necessarily see a contraction, but analysts are keeping an eye on inflation.

In response to a question from Ms. McCreary about continuing virtual meetings, the consensus of the group was to meet via TEAMS and evaluate the potential for in-person meetings to resume in the fall possibly at the Community Recreation Center.

Adjournment:

Mr. Northrop thanked everyone for participating and sharing their information with the group. There being no further business to come before the BDP, the meeting adjourned. The next meeting will be via TEAMS on May 18, 2021, at 8:30 a.m.