

MONTGOMERY TOWNSHIP BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP
MEETING MINUTES
March 16, 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, Allen Nappen, Bob Cole, Mary Griffith-Alfarano, Jay Haenn, Jim Brusilovsky, Troy Tradewell, and Gwyn Karpf. Also present was Candyce Fleuhr Chimera, Board of Supervisors' liaison to the Committee, Carolyn McCreary, Township Manager, and Bruce Shoupe, Director of Planning & Zoning.

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 February 16th meeting had been previously circulated for review and approval.

Mr. Northrop asked Ms. Karpf for an update concerning the Montgomery Mall serving as a vaccination site. She stated the issue for the County continues to be the supply of vaccines and the former Gap store remains available.

New Business: 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.

Ms. Griffith-Alfarano (Fulton Bank) reported there are two grants available for the hospitality industry from Montco Strong and Bucks County. She noted commercial rates are creeping up and customers are seeking 10-year fixed-rate loans which banks have not previously done. She also commented on the difficulties small banks and credit unions are experiencing, noting Bryn Mawr Bank had been recently bought. Ms. Griffith-Alfarano stated 30% of businesses closed due to COVID will likely not reopen and others that do could take months and even years to get back to previous growth indicators.

Ms. Karpf (Simon Properties) stated the mall is in leasing mode and bringing in new tenants remains their #1 focus. She noted that this past Saturday saw an uptick in activity including which is encouraging as people begin to resume their lives while maintaining social distancing.

Ms. Fleuhr Chimera stated the real estate market is busier than ever with sellers receiving many offers with most over asking price and buyers continuing to waive inspections and buying without seeing the home in person.

Mr. Cole (Worldwide Stereo) stated that COVID has not hurt his sales, noting people continue to upgrade their home entertainment systems during the pandemic. He stated people are returning to the store because unlike many other goods and services, they do not want to shop for televisions online.

Mr. Tradewell (5 Points Automotive) stated he has adjusted overhead a bit and there is more work available than he can handle right now. He stated he and his brother are running the business with the retirement of his father.

Mr. Nappen (Nappen & Associates) stated there continues to be a lot of activity for industrial space and he is able to backfill spaces as they become available.

Mr. Brusilovsky (Mark's Jewelers) stated digital commerce has helped with pickup in store and a locker system. He noted he has hired additional staff for customer COVID screening in the store. Overall business is up.

Mr. Haenn (Lansdale Chrysler Dodge Jeep) stated sales are ahead of this time last year when the pandemic was starting but sales in February were hurt by the snowstorms. He spoke about a strained inventory (105 new vehicles compared to 280 last year), and a shortage of computer chips.

Mr. Shoupe stated his department continues to be busy with residential activity, noting people continue to make improvements or put on additions to their homes. Non-residential activity relates to redevelopment of existing spaces.

Mr. Northrop (Edward Jones) stated he reached out to the CEO of Electrosoft regarding problems discussed at previous meetings concerning finding and retaining skilled labor. The Committee discussed wages, the number of students not pursuing "trades" and the limitations of public transportation.

Mr. Northrop also informed the Committee that it appears the Township will try to hold the Autumn Festival which would be the 20th one.

Old Business: None

Adjournment:

- Mr. Northrop thanked everyone for taking the time to participate in the meeting. There being no further business to come before the BDP, the meeting adjourned. The next meeting will be via TEAMS on April 20, 2021 at 8:30 a.m.