

**MONTGOMERY TOWNSHIP BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP
MEETING MINUTES
April 19, 2022**

The April regular monthly meeting of the Montgomery Township Business Development Partnership (BDP) was held at 8:30 A.M. at the Township Administration Building. A virtual option was available via Microsoft Teams. The members of the BDP in attendance included JP Northrop (Vice-Chair), Mary Alfarano, Joy Zwicker, Ryan Frazier, Jim Brusilovsky, and Jacqui Baxter-Rollins. Also present were Beth A. Staab, Board Liaison, Carolyn McCreary, Township Manager, Marianne McConnell, Deputy Zoning Officer, and Derek Muller, Public Information Coordinator. Christopher Frey (North Penn High School) attended to present to the BDP.

Regular Meeting

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m.

Minutes: On a motion by Ms. Alfarano and a second by Ms. Zwicker, the March 2022 meeting minutes were approved.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

New Business

- **Presentation: Christopher Frey, North Penn High School**
 - Christopher Frey of North Penn High School shared information about their new Community Hosted Internship Program (CHIP). The full presentation can be viewed at [North Penn High School - Community Hosted Internship Program \(CHIP\) - YouTube](#)
 - Following the presentation, Ms. McCreary and several members of the BDP expressed interest in participating as a hosting organization for this program.

Old Business

- **Review Speakers/Presenters for future months**
 - The following topics were discussed for upcoming presentations:
 - Healthcare (proposed for May 2022) - **Confirmed**
 - Transportation (proposed for June 2022) - **Confirmed**
 - Internet Scams (proposed for July 2022)
 - Police Department Updates for Businesses (proposed for Fall 2022)
 - Banking & Fraud (TBD)
- **Business/BDP Communication Ideas**
 - Mr. Northrop shared that Mr. Muller has been sending lists of new businesses in the Township to him and Lisa Martin (BDP Chair). The specifics of how new businesses will be welcomed are still under development.
- **Business Updates - Members of the BDP went around the table and shared brief updates about their respective businesses and trends they are seeing.**
 - Joy Zwicker (Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices) – Residential real estate interest rates are 5.25%. They are predicted to increase a quarter of a percent per six hits by 2023. It is likely buyers who are on the cusp at 3%-4% will be pushed out of the market.
 - Mary Alfarano (Fulton Bank) – Similar interest rate trends exist in the commercial side.

As a result, commercial buyers are looking for long-term rates they can lock into to avoid the predicted continued inflation. She also shared information about the Chamber of Commerce's upcoming cultural event at our Community & Recreation Center. This event focuses on increasing inclusivity of all facets of culture in our workplaces.

- Jim Brusilovsky (Mark's Jewelers) – COVID has led to labor challenges, and prices continue to increase consistently. Demand is still there, but there are concerns about the increasing prices.
- Ryan Frazier (Citadel Credit Union) – Many people are applying for home equity loans to lock in rates before they rise.
- Derek Muller (Montgomery Township – Public Information) – Valley Forge Tourism is hosting Crave Montco Month, and there is a call for restaurants, wineries, breweries, distilleries, etc. to offer deals in July. He reminded the BDP about the Volunteer Social and committee bylaw acknowledgments.
- Beth Staab (Board of Supervisors) – The Environmental Advisory Committee has asked the Township to take the temperature about how eliminating plastic bags in Township businesses would affect businesses. Other municipalities have taken this approach. She shared that the current course of action is to educate residents about disposal of plastic bags and encourage them to use reusable bags, but she wanted to see what the thoughts of the business community were. Many businesses are eliminating plastic bags on their own.
- Jacqui Baxter-Rollins (Partnership TMA of Montgomery County) – The SEPTA Bus Revolution has an update this evening, and the link was shared with the BDP. She discussed the potential of SEPTA-operated rideshare options as public transportation use declines in the suburbs. She shared that the Regional Rail reimagining project is moving along. Bike programs are returning with the nice weather, and they are in partnership with 3 Boys and Girls Clubs in Montgomery County. The Partnership TMA is interested in attending community events to share their programs.
- Carolyn McCreary (Montgomery Township Manager) – Supply chain issues are affecting the Township's ability to smoothly implement capital purchases. Additionally, some vendors are not honoring prices. She shared that the Township has hired a GIS Analyst, who will start Monday April 25th. Many employees rotate around local municipalities, so looking to younger interns to learn about the public sector is desirable for the Township's long-term goals. Penn Medicine is interested in building a new facility in Montgomery Township, which will be excellent for business and resident access to healthcare. The Westrum lifestyle apartments project is fully approved and moving forward. Several other businesses will be opening in the Township soon.
- J.P. Northrop (Edward-Jones) – Due to rising interest rates, clients are being advised to invest more defensively. World events continue to cause uncertainty while investing.

Adjournment:

There being no further business to come before the BDP, the meeting adjourned at 9:54am. The next meeting will be on Tuesday May 17, 2022 @ 8:30am. This meeting will be held in-person with a virtual option available.