



Regular Members of the Committee:

Present

Sue Asher
Mayor Richard Onderko
John Holloway
Diana Sieberg
Council Liaison: Suzanne Maeder
Secretary: Nanette Peterson

Absent

Matt Brown

Guests

Caitlin Cunningham
Heide Rivera
Ron Skirkanish
Sandra Brunarski

Councilwoman Maeder called the meeting to order at 6:04PM

MINUTES

Sue Asher moved to accept the July 12, 2022 minutes with the amendment that Community Day will now take place on September 24, 2022. This decision by the Borough was made after the July 2022 EDC meeting and does not affect the minutes as recorded. Joe DeVito III seconded and the minutes were approved as distributed.

MUNICIPAL UPDATE

Mayor Onderko welcomed Chris Edwards to the meeting. Mayor Onderko stated that Manville's Main Street is the most dangerous roadway to pedestrian traffic in Somerset County. He also stated that we need a Chamber of Commerce in town and the EDC was created to improve communication with the business community as a first step toward launching a Chamber.

GUEST SPEAKER

Chris Edwards, President of the Somerset County Business Partnership (SCBP), addressed the committee. He has been with the SCBP for over 10 years. Their job is to provide services for the entire County whether the municipality belongs to the partnership or not. It has nothing to do with membership – these events are to grow businesses. They have helped other communities to get their business partnerships back together and believes he can help do the same for Manville. Warren relaunched their chamber through the SCBP. Manville needs to get on the offensive and talk about our access to the trains as well as our formal downtown to attract new companies to the Borough.

There were two initiatives launched this year that can benefit Manville immediately:

1. Whysomersetnj.org – launched a website to help interested parties learn about Somerset County. There is information about all 21 municipalities within the county.
2. [Sip and See Somerset](#) – This publication highlights the beer trail; there will be a harvest edition that will include local farms and a winter version for winter months. The QR codes direct people to local places and events. It will be up on the Somerset County tourism website as well.

Manville needs a dedicated group of businesses who want to revitalize the downtown. Chris believes businesses should pay dues right from the start as a measure of commitment. The current culture wants immediate ROI focus, but a Chamber is a long-term proposition.

Somerset County towns with managed retail districts:

- Downtown Somerville Alliance – they focus on retention first, then act as gate-keepers to new business in town.
- Downtown Bound Brook – currently managed by Kate Brendall
- Somerset County recently hired an Economic Development officer. She can be a valuable resource for us.
- Bernardsville also has a managed business district – they recently started a downtown alliance
- Raritan brought in an outside consultant to come up with a plan to revitalize their downtown

Chris suggested we create a passport program for residents with bigger businesses providing prizes. Restaurants are the key. People are looking for experiences – art, escape rooms, etc.

The Small Business Development Center at RVCC closed. Kean University is taking over the territory for Somerset County. They need to put a satellite location out here. The County provided information on 8 potential locations. They want to foster connections between universities and businesses before they open and develop a network of small business incubators.

Plans pertaining to our upcoming Meet and Greet were shared. Chris believes making sure the businesses are happy is the most important objective. Giving them a forum to vent will be positively perceived. Down the road, he thinks the SCBP will be ready to help and make connections.

OLD BUSINESS

MEET AND GREET – September 13, 2022

The event should be low key. We simply want to start a conversation, gauge the level of interest in future meetings and /or business development workshops, and get actionable feedback if possible. Two sub-committees were formed. Caitlin Cunningham, Sandra Brunarski and Suzanne Maeder will work on the Vision Board project. Sue Asher, Nan Peterson and Diana Sieberg will work on refreshments, décor, and the program.

PUBLIC EVENTS

Updates were provided on the following events:

Community Day

- Date moved to September 24th from 1 to 6 PM.
- There will not be fireworks this year.

LAMA Bike Nights

- 132 bikes at first event/80 bikes at another/ turnout is based on weather conditions
- There will be a Bike and Car show on Thursday, August 18th at the VFW
- They will collect school supplies for MSD
- Heide will email us fliers

GENERAL COMMENTS OR CONCERNS

Caitlin Cunningham asked if Manville ever had a Business Executive Director for downtown or if it might be possible to hire a management firm to be the point of contact for our business district? A discussion ensued about whether taxpayers or businesses should pay for this service.

Joe DeVito III stated that we need flood mitigation first. We must solve the root problem of no remediation in our immediate future.

NEXT MEETING

Meet and Greet event with local businesses on Tuesday, September 13, 6PM at the Manville Public Library. Our regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 11, 2022 at 6 pm at the Manville Public Library.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

Joe DeVito III moved to adjourn. John Holloway seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at 7:25