



## **Minutes: Economic Development Advisory Committee January 11, 2016**

The regular meeting of the Middle Smithfield Township Economic Development Advisory Committee was held on January 11, 2016 at 6:30 pm at the Schoonover Municipal Building with Robert Hetu as Chairman presiding.

**Board Members:** Robert Hetu, Carrie Wetherbee, Carl Wilgus, Beverly Brown

**Township Staff:** Supervisor Annette Atkinson, Supervisor Michael Dwyer, Supervisor Mark Oney, and Judith Acosta as Liaison and Recording

Secretary

Residents: Debbie Kulick, Ed Regina, Adam Rodriguez

Meeting started at 6:35 pm with Robert Hetu as Chairman.

### **Reorganization**

- Chairman Robert Hetu was reappointed by the Board of Supervisors at the Reorganization Meeting held on January 4, 2016
- Carl Wilgus nominated Carrie Wetherbee for the position of Vice Chairman. Beverly Brown seconded the nomination. There were no objections. Appointment passed 4-0.
- Carrie Wetherbee nominated Carl Wilgus for the position of Secretary. Robert Hetu seconded the nomination. There were no objections. Appointment passed 4-0.

### **Minutes and Agenda**

- Motion to accept & approve the minutes from the December 14, 2015 meeting was made by Carl Wilgus. Carrie Wetherbee seconded the motion. All members were in favor.
- Motion to accept & approve the Agenda for January 11, 2015 was made by Carrie Wetherbee. Carl Wilgus seconded the motion. All members were in favor.

### **Correspondence**

- No correspondence

### **Old Business.**

### **National Park Service/Geo-tourism Update - Carl Wilgus**

- There have been nearly 200 nominations made so far for the NatGeo map. Many are active and ready to turn on, some are pending review and some are still inactive in the process. Not surprisingly, Pennsylvania has twice as many submissions as New York and New Jersey.

- There will be a conference call on Friday, January 15<sup>th</sup>, to offer an analysis of the nominations already received and what more is needed for any who would like to participate.
- Nominations continue through the end of the month, and perhaps beyond, for sites to be included on the map. Residents, businesses, etc. are encouraged to post nominations. Carl suggested to Ed Regina to nominate his own business for inclusion as it had not already been nominated.
- The kick-off event for Pennsylvania will be May 5<sup>th</sup>. More details on this event will follow.

### **Shop Local 2015 – Judy Acosta, Annette Atkinson**

- The Shop Local Holiday Event ended successfully with 555 unique card number activations and 48 participating businesses. That's more than twice the activations and 25% more business participation over last year's reported numbers.
- Google Analytics for our Shop Local website ([www.mstShopLocal.com](http://www.mstShopLocal.com)) showed a tremendous increase in unique page views, and that more people stayed on the mstShopLocal.com page, and that they browsed more pages (i.e., visited more shops.)
- Facebook analysis showed a significant increase in the click through rate, as well as engaged users. For the 48 businesses and main page all being boosted for the month, resulting in thousands of views, there were only a dozen "negative actions" such as unliking the page or post.
- Robert Hetu offered some metrics on the WhereMST app for the year as follows:
  - 1500 page views this year
  - 66 new users and 34 returning users
  - Shop Local was 2<sup>nd</sup> highest visited after the home page screen. The "Play" category is also visited often.
- A survey has been sent to all those users who activated their cards for feedback on the event. All responses by January 31<sup>st</sup> will be entered into a prize drawing.
- A survey to business owners on how the event went in their eyes is expected to be sent as well. Discussion suggested offering an extension to the Holiday Event in 2016 to end the event on January 2<sup>nd</sup>. A question of this nature will be added to the business survey.
- Discussion of upcoming events, such as Restaurant Week and a possible scavenger hunt, was held for 2016 calendar planning.

### **New Business**

#### **Calendar for 2016 – planning for events, etc. – Robert Hetu**

- Prior to discussion of events, Robert Hetu introduced a review of the committee's vision and mission.

- The EDC Vision originated in 2013. The question was posed as to whether or not the committee is moving in the same direction and if any changes are suggested. All members were in favor of keeping the vision the same.
  - Vision
    - MSTEDC will create a diverse business community that is prosperous and innovative while built on a stable economic foundation.
    - MST will be a community that facilitates growth while preserving its tourist friendly identity and natural resources for future generations.
- Review of the EDC Mission resulted in much discussion.
  - Mission
    - To be a resource for the business community:
      - Growing and supporting local business
      - Marketing existing businesses and the community
      - Attracting new businesses that will be complementary to our existing base.
    - To create a stable and viable economic foundation:
      - Advocacy for businesses
      - Collaboration
      - Education of both public and business
      - Information
- The major points discussed were Education and Information. It was suggested that we haven't done much in education over the last two years. Robert Hetu recommends balance stating that we have done a lot to grow the local businesses and market them as well as attract new businesses but, beyond the LERTA, we lack in educating the business owners on the resources available..
- The possibility of holding seminars for local business owners was discussed. Prior seminars through past EDC boards had been held with minimal attendance. It was suggested that perhaps themed mailings over the course of a year would suffice.
- The Realtor Package that was presented to both Pocono Mountains Realtor Association and Better Homes & Gardens Wilkins Realty was successful in informing realtors on what Middle Smithfield Township has to offer. The EDC will continue to pursue opportunities to inform and educate the realtors.
- Annette Atkinson suggested, with regard to the empty and for-sale parcels, that the committee needs to find the businesses and bring them in, rather than wait for an interested party to contact the township. A project utilizing the township intern to gather information for the committee to follow up these parcels will be started shortly.
- Robert Hetu identified action items from this discussion:
  - All members should come to the next meeting with a suggestion of what businesses are missing from Middle Smithfield Township.

- All members should connect with the realtors that they know and invite them to our next EDC meeting or one in the future. Judy Acosta suggested that the committee also advise that we can schedule a presentation at the realtor's office as well.
- Moving on to planning the calendar for 2016, Robert Hetu led the committee in creating a tentative timeline for planning purposes. A printout from this planning session is attached.
- There was further discussion on extending our Holiday Event to January 1<sup>st</sup>. Since the first of the year is a Sunday, Monday, January 2<sup>nd</sup> was offered as an option. All seemed to agree as many are off from work on that day and continue to shop. This will be presented to the businesses for the Holiday Event.
- There was discussion about when other Shop Local events could be held. Perhaps smaller events focusing on a specialized retail such as the local garden centers. August is a very slow time for planting, clothing could also be emphasized for back to school.
- Restaurant week will be held 4/9 – 4/17 this year with a kick-off event in conjunction with the opening night of the photo exhibit at Whispering Pines on 4/8. A food & wine pairing dishes from local restaurants with wines from local wineries is planned. The PPC photo submissions will include photos with a food theme.
- The Mastodon Scavenger Hunt will be planned for early May – before the children are out of school. While the Mastodon foot will not be in MST (it will be on loan to the Eastern Monroe Hughes Library), it can still be included in the scavenger hunt as, perhaps, the ending destination.

#### **Announcements:**

- Annette Atkinson asked for help with our upcoming newsletter, if anyone would like to assist with writing an article. Robert Hetu will write an article for the EDC and Carl Wilgus will write one for the Geotourism map and the NPS. Carrie Wetherbee will coordinate with Holly Freese in the office for her portion that will be for the Historical Commission.
- The Budget Presentation that was given in December is available to anyone who would like a copy.
- The next Board of Supervisors meeting on January 28<sup>th</sup> will preview 2016 for the entire township.

#### **Public Comment:**

- Adam Rodriguez brought up an idea of an electronic sign to advertise to the community the events that are taking place. Mark Oney offered that we have a sign at Echo Park on Route 209 that is lit and changed regularly.
- Carrie Wetherbee asked if we have heard anything about the reassessments taking place. Annette Atkinson advised that appeals had started last Wednesday.

- Ed Regina asked for an update on the sidewalk project. Michael Dwyer stated that if we get the grant then the work would start within the year. The existing right-of-way would be used but it is in the conceptual stage right now for budgeting purposes, until we get the grant. If we do get the grant, then this moves from concept to engineering. Another option is to have PennDOT include the sidewalk project in their planned scope of work. Phase 1 is from Price Chopper to Municipal Drive, Phase 2 is Municipal Drive to the dog park.

**The next meeting is scheduled for February 8, 2015. Meeting adjourned at 8:09pm**

DRAFT