

New Britain Borough Community & Business Committee Minutes April 12, 2012

Present: R Belchic, D Byrne, M E Coia, J D'Agostino, D Fermier, C Forlano, D Holewinski, D Joss, D von Lipsey

Excused: L Moxey, J Gilmore Guest: Lynn Bush, Exec Director Bucks County Planning Commission

At 7:30 PM Marie Esher Coia called the meeting to order. Minutes from the March 8, 2012 meeting were read and accepted.

Information exchanged:

Delaware Valley College: After meeting with Derek Smith, Director of Residence Life and Matthew Kaminski, Director of Student Involvement, Marie followed up several times requesting the College website be updated with borough restaurant information. Lynn suggested we ask the College to add a link to our Borough website from their site. Also, we should consider reaching out to DelVal regarding their need to source affordable housing. Robert B will contact the college president.

DVRPC TCDI Grant: No information on their web site regarding 2012 grants. Perhaps the grants are offered every two years? Lynn shared that the grant is very transportation oriented, perhaps a sidewalk plan to access the train station.

Bitzers – BC Redevelopment Authority: Lynn spoke to BCRDA and learned that Exec Director, Bob White, and Deputy Director, Jeff Darwak, spent quite a bit of time with a former potential buyer for the Bitzer Property and are aware of the environmental issues. The area around Duck Deli, specifically development of the Knoll Property would be of interest and perhaps qualify for PennDot dollars. Lynn will let Bob White know someone from our committee will be in touch with him.

Borough Newsletter: Marie visited six new borough businesses with a letter she composed, copies of past newsletters and let them know they may place advertising in future newsletters. The current newsletter highlights these businesses.

The next issue deadline is July 31. Bucks-Mont Party Center will be in the next Spotlight and Byrne Sewing in the following newsletter Spotlight.

New Britain Market Profile: Lynn provided Marie with market profile data. David J pointed out that although the household income demographic in the 3-5 mile radius is a plus, we are competing with other retail centers that draw people away from us because they have an interest point where people collect and retail is co-located. We are the hole in the donut between two larger areas. David shared that anchor stores look at store sales per square foot. A discussion ensued and borough "destination" businesses were pointed out, including an appliance/kitchen design store, cabinet

maker/design store, boat dealer, thrift store and Byrne Sewing. Perhaps there are a hundred little things we can do to make our borough and retailers more of a destination, perhaps creating "a look" and holding events.

Business Survey: Add a survey item to ask if there is a business impact now that trains do not service the New Britain station on the weekend.

DelVal Student Survey: Tabled for a future time, not a helpful exercise at this time.

New Business:

Debbie Byrne brought up the lack of retail space at her end of the borough and Lynn said this is the result of deliberate

zoning decisions made by the borough some 15 years ago. Debbie has heard from other business owners that there is a

lack of parking, sidewalks and buildings zoned for retail space available for sale. Further, she has heard from more than

one business owner that it is not easy to do business with the borough. The computer store owner would like to expand

but there is no room. Robert B suggested that the Planning Commission review current zoning ordinances and look at

where we might create a block of retail space in that area of the borough.

Chris was approached by a DelVal student who is putting together a packet for incoming freshmen and asked if Chris

wanted to include the Duck Deli in the packet. The due date to be included is in August.

Perhaps a flyer could be

included in targeted business surveys so the appropriate businesses will have the opportunity to be listed in the DelVal

packet.

Action items:

ALL: Review the sample surveys for the next meeting and make recommendations as to what to include and what to

strike from the samples.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 PM. The next meeting will be held May 10, 2012 at 7:30 PM.