

New Britain Borough Community & Business Committee Minutes March 08, 2012

Present: R Belchic, M E Coia, J D'Agostino, D Holewinski, L Moxey, D von Lipsey
Excused: D Byrne, C Forlano, J Gilmore, D Fermier, D Joss Guest: John H. Davis, Borough Manager (Doylestown)

At 7:30 PM Marie Esher Coia called the meeting to order. Minutes from the February 9 meeting were read and accepted.

Information exchanged:

John Davis provided the committee with a perspective from Doylestown Borough's revitalization history. Doylestown

did not attract industry because they are located on a hill and without a natural water source. As the seat of county

government, they do have a baseline 9-5 M-F economy. In 1964, the Federal Government offered many millions of

dollars in urban renewal but was rejected by a business and community group that formed to create Operation '64. The

purpose was to save buildings from the wrecking ball and encourage owners to paint. The community group bought

planters. When the by-pass came, it was embraced rather than rejected, making D-town a destination rather than a

pass through. A HARB (Historic Architectural Review Board) was formed. These were controversial at the time. In

addition, there was recession, the theater was failing and anchor store Woolworth was closing.

The vision of a revitalized Doylestown began with the installation of historic street lights (24 in 2 years) accomplished

through a private/public partnership. It was the first time the Borough government became involved with the business

community. In 1992, the Borough Manager and staff presented a revitalization plan to the community. A revitalization

Board was formed (By-Laws attached) by members of the Doylestown Business and Community Alliance, Council and

Borough Manager. The Board leverages private dollars, grants and tax dollars and has successfully reinvented

relationships between the private and the business sectors. They attracted private investment through physical

improvements, using tax dollars. They reviewed zoning/ordinances removing impediments and welcoming development

by the private sector. They defined what the Borough wanted in terms of architecture. Borough staff met with

developers, defined Borough needs and listened to the needs/wants of the developers. Council also listens and gives

latitude where possible to meet the business need. Doylestown aggressively enforces code, including painting, weeding

and cleaning. Final thoughts: 1. create a buzz, 2. Rather than recruiting businesses, make a conscious decision to make

the Borough attractive to investment, 3. if businesses will focus on architecture, we will work with them.

Marie reported on our committee at the February 14, 2012 Borough Council meeting.

David H. and Marie met with the Directors of Student Involvement and Resident Life of DelVal and asked why they think students do not patronize Borough businesses. One issue is walk ability; freshmen do not have a car on campus. SEPTA does not have a bus stop in the Borough and trains no longer stop on weekends. An issue for the college is affordable student housing within the Borough. There are 1700 day students; 1000 live on campus. David asked if we would be permitted to survey the students. The college is interested, but want to see the survey prior to distribution. DelVal is interested in community outreach. They are confident of reaching university status in a couple of years.

DVRPC – TCDI grant: Marie reported this is not an implementation grant but an engineering and design grant. We must match 20%, of which 5% must be in cash. Perhaps this could be used to enhance the islands along Butler Avenue.

Decisions:

Mission Statement was adopted as written; add to Borough website along with committee member's names.

The Borough passed a resolution to increase publishing of the newsletter from two issues to four issues a year and to accept advertising. Ads will be business card size in pdf format and cost a maximum of \$75.00. (suggested by Elaine

Crook, publisher of the newsletter) New businesses will be welcomed and highlighted in the newsletter.

"What makes New Britain Borough unique": add The National Shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa and the Historic New Britain Baptist Church, Cemetery and War Memorial.

New Britain Borough survey: Table for our business members to review.

Ideas:

Use Survey Monkey for the DelVal questionnaire. Recognize their homecoming each year.

Beautification of the Town Center (shopping center)

Write an article on the New Britain Baptist Church for the Borough newsletter.

Determining direction:

Priorities should be set based upon our fact finding, e.g., surveys.

Action items:

Marie and Jackie will work on a flyer to be used when soliciting businesses for advertising.

Marie will send the link for the DVRPC – TCDI grant, all committee members will take a look.

Marie will ask Lynn Bush for samples from other communities that have surveyed their business community.

Bitzer property: David H. will check our Borough property maintenance ordinance; find out what constitutes a "blighted

property" from the Redevelopment Authority and how to have a building condemned.

2012 Community info guide: David H. will investigate the cost to update and print.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 PM. The next meeting will be held April 12, 2012 at 7:30 PM.