

LAWRENCE TOWNSHIP GROWTH & REDEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
Tuesday, June 11, 2019

The following are the minutes of the Growth & Redevelopment Committee meeting, which was held on Tuesday, June 11 2019 at 6:39 p.m. in the Lawrence Township Municipal Building, Lower Level Conference Room.

Statement of Adequate Notice:

Adequate notice of the regular meeting of the Lawrence Township Growth & Redevelopment Committee has been provided by filing an annual meeting schedule with the Municipal Clerk and by filing the agenda with the Municipal Clerk, posting prominently in the Municipal Building and mailing to the Trenton Times and the Trentonian.

Roll Call:

Present: Charles Lavine
Robert Pluta
Joan Brame
Maria Connolly
Peter Ferrone
Brian Vaughn
Andrew Frank
James Kilduff

Absent: None

Excused Absence: Lovette Love-Stevens
Tushar Patel
Teresita Bastides-Heron
Melissa Clark
Chris LaFlamme
Ryan Kennedy
Cathy LeCompte, School Board Liaison

Also Present: Christopher Bobbitt, Council Liaison
Susan Snook, Secretary

Minutes:

The May 14, 2019 minutes were unanimously approved with a change.

Public Comment:

None

LAWRENCE TOWNSHIP GROWTH & REDEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
Tuesday, June 11, 2019
Page 2

Business Outreach:

Chairperson Pluta stated we have the owner of The Gingered Peach, Joanne Kennedy Brown. Ms. Brown stated she has been in Lawrence for five years and the nightmare was navigating through the system when you are trying to get your business open. She employees 22 people with 16 at a full time capacity. Trying to start up the busy was not as easy and the primary issue was certain fire codes that pertain to oven and hood requirements. The State requirements for the type of ovens they use do not require having a commercial hood over it. She went to our Fire Sub-code Official's office and showed the specs of the oven and she asked if a hood needed to be over the oven; two days later received a call and was told no hood was needed. However, three weeks before she opened she received a call and told she needed a hood, which costs \$15,000.00. So finding that amount of money is not easy. She submitted in the specs for the hood one week later and the permit was held for three (3) weeks. So she made a phone call and was informed by the person on the phone, that they had 30-days to approve hood permits and is going to take the 30-days. She received her permit the next day because she called Cathleen Lewis and feels she should not have to grease the wheel or make a connection just to get a piece of paper signed to install the hood that she was asked to put in. So everything was a hurdle to get opened.

She has opened other businesses and this was a total nightmare. She got so desperate that she contacted our Business Advocate, Andy Link, who helped her and is a Saint. If the Township is looking to attract more business here, it is time to make it a friendly place to do business with. Her other concern was how the Township Officials could not answer her questions because they don't want to be bothered.

She met with other businesses to see how they can bring their businesses into the next stage and will help them to walk through it. Most of the major problems came from Construction and did not make sense to her because it was the same use. They only repaired walls and the only thing they were doing was bringing in equipment and plugging it into outlets. It was because of lack of transparency and if you don't know what the rules are you can't play fair. She spoke about Lawrenceville Main Street and how she is the only business owner on the Board.

Mr. Nerwinski was present at the meeting and Ms. Brown told Mr. Nerwinski about her applying for permit for the hood. Mr. Nerwinski responded that we have a plan for a part-time business development coordinator and it will be a perfect opportunity to work with new businesses coming into town to try to stream line and assist and be pro-active in the plans. It is very difficult for him being the manager to override construction officials to make things easier for new businesses because in the end, if something goes wrong, the first place everybody looks is what did the town do, what did the inspector's do or not do to make things easier for someone and this part he will support the officials.

Ms. Brown responded it should not take three months to tell the business what in addition they want. Mr. Nerwinski stated she is right in her complaint but our Town does not have all the employees necessary to make everybody happy. What frustrated her was that some of her other counterparts do not have hoods over their ovens and have half the capacity. So how do we make this better so next time we have the answer.

This is an incredible community and spoke about Starbucks coming in to the neighborhood because she can't out think a major corporation. Two amazing things happened on opening day someone sent out an e-mail stating to remember the Gingered Peach and a resident approached her who wrote a check to her for an espresso machine. She has some aggressive plans for Lawrenceville, which involves five different businesses to create a food destination between Gordon Avenue and Craven Lane. She found Mr. Link by digging through our web-site and how do we make it easier to look it up.

LAWRENCE TOWNSHIP GROWTH & REDEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
Tuesday, May 14, 2019
Page 3

Mr. Nerwinski stated the surplus in the Town was pretty desperate that it was down \$300,000 for the municipality so there was no money to be put into a new web site. However, we are doing a new web-site now and will be easy to find the Business Advocate and making it more business friendly. We recovered and asked our employees to do much more work for years to take zero percent increases and we are now back on track.

Mr. Frank stated one of the things coming up for businesses is signage and parking. Ms. Brown stated signage is a touchy issue but sometimes there is a little bit of confusion in terms of what signage is allowed. When she went to the zoning office she was informed it was a certain percentage of your façade. She spoke about the signage that was installed for Starbucks, and was informed they had to appear before the Planning Board to ask for variances for the additional signage. For additional signage she would put it up on back of the building facing the parking lot. She stated to replace her existing sign she had to submit in a plan, pay a fee and it took one week.

Mr. Nerwinski informed her that the sign mentality has been more about restriction but he views the sign issue is to grow businesses and be more successful. We are re-doing our sign ordinance because it is all about the businesses. Mayor Bobbitt suggested a checklist for things like these for the departments you need to check on, as an example if dealing with food and kids, check with the Health Department and understanding there is a variance process for many things so if you are have amazing backer, it makes sense to go bigger on signage but you have to do a process.

She spoke about a plan for the Hullfish parking lot. Chairperson Pluta was asked about what this Committee could do and he responded that with getting the new business advocate that would help businesses and the other item was window signage to make that more business friendly. The other issue is parking and see if the number of parking spaces could be reviewed. Ms. Brown stated the biggest problem in her area is that people park in her lot to go to Starbucks because they do not have enough parking spaces. Mr. Nerwinski stated there are 20 new parking spaces on Gordon Avenue and there is a grass strip along the side street, owned by Hullfish, could be some additional parking.

Ms. Connolly had asked the Explorations Day Care to attend but she was could not make it, maybe to the next meeting. She will be reaching out to USA Nails in the Lawrence Shopping Center, owner is Jessica. Ms. Brame mentioned Allied Vision and the oldest small business in the Lawrence Shopping Center.

Categories for Awards Program:

Chairperson Pluta reached out to Cobblestone Creek and the traditional breakfast which is \$20.00 per person, plus 21% gratuity and sales tax is what was last year. The date voted on is October 23, 2019 at 8:30 a.m. at \$20.00 per person.

Mr. Frank reached out to Rider University, the Dean of Business Administrations and she is going to explore within her department to find someone that is suitable to speak at our program. The nomination forms are on google and have to check for Facebook. Ms. Brame reached out to Lorraine Allen to see if she can recommend someone.

The awards will remain the same and if we do not get a nomination for that category it will not be filled.

Sign Ordinance:

Ms. Connolly stated she looked at the ordinance and has to call Mr. Parvesse to find out if it is an issue and what are the complaints about window signs. It is 25% of the window space or 10% of the front façade, whichever is less. Violetta wanted to utilize more of her window space; however, she is far from the road so not sure if the window signage would help her.

Other Business:

- 25 MPH issue on Route 1

Violetta was informed that when the Township takes over Route 1 that the speed limit was going to be changed to 25 mph; however, Mr. Parvesse stated it is going to be 35 mph. The current speed limit is 45 mph from Texas north and then goes to 40 mph. The Township has not taken over the property yet and once it happens it will be 35 mph, after a speed survey is performed.

Mayor Bobbitt stated we are still in negotiations with the State about certain and we are in the planning process to because we received a grant from DVRPC to redo the streetscape from the round-about to the Brunswick Circle. Clarke Caton & Hintz is doing the report.

- Parking Lot that is owned by the Township (between Burger King and her property). Violetta spoke with the past Manager and he stated it is not going to happen and she wants to look into again. Mr. Parvesse stated for her to create a concept plan to show how she will configure the parking area and then set up a meeting between him and Mr. Nerwinski.

Ms. Connolly also stated that this Committee wanted to do a brochure or one page that explains the sign ordinance, like a summary guideline and she feels that Clarke Caton Hintz should to it.

Ms. Brame stated there is a block party in south Lawrence on June 22, 2019 at Violetta's on Brunswick Pike.

Respectfully submitted,



Susan J. Snook
Recording Secretary

Minutes approved: _____

July 9, 2019