

**Regional Center Partnership of Somerset County
Approved
Wednesday, May 19, 2021 Meeting Minutes**

The meeting was convened by means of video conference.

Name/Organization

Voting Members

Troy Fischer, Chair, RCP
Victoria Allen, RWJBarnabas Health
Anthony Tufaro, Ethicon Somerville
Michael Pappas, Bridgewater Administrator
Andrew Fresco, Bridgewater
Michael Patente, Raritan Borough Council
Angela Knowles, Raritan Borough Planner
Dennis Sullivan, Mayor, Somerville
Somerville Councilwoman Jane Kobuta
Deirdre Rosinski, Somerville Planning Board
Paul Drake, Somerset County (SC) Board of County Commissioners
Sara Sooy, SC Board of County Commissioners (Alternate)
Bernie Navatto, SC Planning Board
Walter Lane, SC Planning Division
Geoffrey Soriano, SC Park Commission
Chris Edwards, SC Business Partnership

Non-voting County Support Staff

James Ruggieri, SC Planning Division

Non-Voting Guests

Barry Ableman, NJ Office for Planning Advocacy
Donna Allison, RideWise
Rich Reitman, The Reitman Group

The meeting commenced at 5:00 PM.

Business Items

Call to Order

RCP Chair Troy Fischer called the meeting to order.

Attendance Roll Call

Principal Planner James Ruggieri read through the roll call and noted for the record the voting members that were in attendance.

Chair's Remarks

Chair Troy Fischer welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Adoption of Meeting Minutes

Chair Fischer asked if there were any corrections to the meeting minutes; there being none, Chair Fischer asked for a motion to approve the March 17, 2021 meeting minutes. Somerville Councilwoman Jane Kobuta moved and Raritan Councilman Michael Patente seconded the motion.

A voice vote was taken resulting in the following voting record:

Ayes: 14
Nays: 0
Abstentions: 0

The motion to approve the minutes was approved.

Treasurer's Report for March-April 2021

Mr. Ruggieri noted the Treasurer's Report was sent to everyone with the meeting reminder. Mr. Ruggieri reported he has been in contact with Suplee Clooney & Company to finalize the Management Representation letter prior to the completion of the draft audit report and IRS and New Jersey tax-related filings. Mr. Ruggieri will report more details at the next meeting. Mr. Ruggieri then offered to answer any questions regarding the Treasurer's Report.

Chair Fischer asked if there were any questions or comments concerning the Treasurer Report. There being no questions or comments, Chair Fischer asked for a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report for March-April 2021. Somerset County Planning Board Chair Bernie Navatto moved and Somerset County Planning Director Walter Lane seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken resulting in the following voting record:

Ayes: Troy Fischer, Vicky Allen, Anthony Tufaro, Andrew Fresco, Michael Patente, Angela Knowles, Dennis Sullivan, Jane Kobuta, Deidre Rosinski, Paul Drake, Bernie Navatto, Walter Lane, Geoff Soriano, and Chris Edwards.
Nays: none
Abstentions: none

The motion was approved.

Public Comment Period

There were no public comments concerning the Action item on the agenda.

Action Item

Awarding of Year 2 of Competitive Contract to Provide Principal Marketing Services

(Marketing consultant Rich Reitman was moved into a "waiting room" before any discussion commenced about the Awarding of Competitive Contract to Provide Principal Marketing Services agenda item.)

Mr. Ruggieri reported that, following a formal bidding process, in May of 2020 the Regional Center Partnership Board of Trustees awarded a Competitive Contract to The Reitman Group to provide principal marketing services at a rate of \$19,000 per year. Staff keeps track of the completion of scope of work tasks per the contract and The Reitman Group has completed the work tasks; e.g., 2019 Annual Achievements Report, bi-monthly newsletters, prepare press releases, provide regular website updates and maintenance, provide monthly analytics, etc. Mr. Reitman has enhanced the website content by adding a series of regional center maps as well as links to affiliated organizations. Mr. Reitman has also been updating RCP's Facebook account.

The 1st year of this contract ends May 21, 2021. As a matter of procedure, formal action is required be taken to award the 2nd year of the competitive contract. This would be to continue the same scope of work activities through May 2022 at the same rate of \$19,000. Staff conferred with the Marketing Committee and the Marketing Committee had no objection to awarding the 2nd year contract to the Reitman Group to perform the same work for \$19,000. Staff reported this to the Executive Committee and staff did not receive any objections from the Executive Committee regarding awarding the 2nd year contract to the Reitman Group to perform the same marketing activities for \$19,000.

Mr. Ruggieri noted that, under the adopted 2021 budget and work program, \$25,000 is budgeted for Public and Business Education. The budget was prepared in anticipation of the need to commit funding for the 2nd year marketing contract with the remaining \$6,000 line item balance to be used for other marketing-related expenses. As a matter of procedure, formal action is required to award the 2nd year of the contract. Mr. Ruggieri concluded his report by noting that, if there are no questions or objections, the recommendation is to award the 2nd year competitive contract to The Reitman Group to provide principal marketing tasks at a rate of \$19,000.00. Mr. Ruggieri then offered to entertain any questions.

There being no questions, Mr. Navatto moved to award the 2nd year competitive contract to The Reitman Group to provide principal marketing services for a not to exceed amount of \$19,000.00; Mr. Patente seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken resulting in the following voting record:

Ayes: Troy Fischer, Vicky Allen, Anthony Tufaro, Andrew Fresco, Michael Patente, Angela Knowles, Dennis Sullivan, Jane Kobuta, Deidre Rosinski, Paul Drake, Bernie Navatto, Walter Lane, Geoff Soriano, and Chris Edwards.

Nays: none

Abstentions: none

The motion was approved.

Information Items

Marketing Update

Marketing consultant Rich Reitman reported the May newsletter was completed and distributed. The Reitman Group is working with staff to help resolve certain technical issues involving the website. Mr. Reitman has provided weekly website activity (Analytics) reports as well as the first quarterly Analytics report. Raritan River Rain Barrel Rebate Program press releases continue to be issued regularly. The first draft of the 2020 Annual Achievements Report has been submitted to staff for review. Work has begun on the July newsletter. Mr. Reitman is redesigning the Facebook page. Mr. Reitman also described what Facebook and Instagram call "Guides" which is a new addition to the Facebook page which allows first-time viewers to have a direct link to go directly to important information items in addition to the landing page; e.g., a news release about the Annual Achievements Report will direct Facebook viewers directly to the Annual Achievements report posted on the website.

Strategic Initiatives Update

Somerset County Business Partnership President & CEO Chris Edwards updated everyone on the Suburban Disadvantage Part 2 initiative concerning the New Jersey Economic Recovery Act of 2020 (NJ ERA) adopted in January 2021. There is presently a bit of a lull in the process as a “clean-up” bill of the new legislation creating NJ ERA gets underway over next four to six weeks. Mr. Edwards described the Business Partnership’s recent Suburban Disadvantage Part 2 activities. After the Business Partnership presented the “Draft Findings The Suburban Disadvantage Emerge Program of the Economic Recovery Act of 2020” (the briefing presentation) at the March 17 RCP meeting, the following day the Business Partnership presented the same briefing presentation information to Somerset County Business Partnership’s Executive Committee and got their approval to assist the RCP and the Somerset County Board of County Commissioners regarding the Suburban Disadvantage Part 2 initiative. Pursuant to this, on March 23 the Business Partnership presented the same briefing presentation information to the County Commissioners and got their insight and discussed ways to not only assist the Regional Center but the County as a whole on this issue. On March 31, 2021 RCP sent a letter to all six Somerset County legislative representatives about the “suburban disadvantage” provisions of NJERA. There has since been dialogue with most of the legislative representatives and with the Governor’s office. Mr. Edwards anticipates this coming to a head in the next few weeks as the clean-up bill progresses.

Somerset County Commissioner Deputy Director Sara Sooy reported on some of the feedback received from legislative representatives including New Jersey Assemblyman Andrew Zwicker who is leading the charge on this issue in the State House and from talks with Joseph Kelly, Deputy Chief of Staff for Economic Growth for Governor Phil Murphy. There has been a lot of good feedback from the legislative representatives who are very happy to see how well the recommendations were tailor-made for adoption. Pursuant to this the legislators intend to make legislative changes through the clean-up bill. Commissioner Deputy Director Sooy said all the work being done for this cause is greatly appreciated.

Mr. Edwards added that utilizing the mapping tool (created by the Somerset County Planning Division) that was used in the March 17 RCP briefing presentation has been very helpful to show Senate Majority Leader Steve Sweeney and others leading this charge at the state level how the NJERA legislation similarly impacts their respective districts and demonstrating that this is not just a Regional Center and Somerset County issue but a statewide issue.

Municipal and Other Reports:

Somerville Mayor Dennis Sullivan shared that there have been a number of ribbon cutting ceremonies with new businesses opening up along Main Street, such as Epic Cookie Shop which filled 1,300 cookie orders in one day last week. Mayor Sullivan noted he extended a word of congratulations to RWJ University Hospital Somerset for receiving the prestigious Healthgrades 2021 Patient Safety Excellence Award which places them in the top 5% for hospitals in the nation for patient safety. The Borough is moving forward with the Emergency Services building on North Gaston Avenue which when completed will be a real stimulus for the eastern gateway district of town.

Construction of the Somerset Station transit-oriented development next to the Somerville train station is making great progress. Mayor Sullivan thanked Somerville Planning Board Vice-Chair Deirdre Rosinski for working with the project’s owner on a concept pocket park, noting that the TOD will feature a number of eateries and some public enhancements as well. The TOD should be coming online by late fall or next spring.

The Somerville Town Center Phase III parking deck on West Main Street is rapidly going up. Mayor Sullivan noted that while New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) has denied the Borough’s application for parklets along Main Street (Route 28) which were allowed last year, NJDOT has indicated they will allow Somerville to somehow increase their sidewalk capacity.

Regarding community events, Somerville will have a Flag Day Festival, Cruise Night “cruisers” are expected to show up for the Memorial Day weekend, Thursday movie nights and Saturday night concerts in downtown Somerville will be starting again while adhering to any social distancing and masking requirements that may be

in place during the summer. Mayor Sullivan is looking forward to a lot of business activity in town, enjoying outdoor eating on the street, seeing kids having a lot of fun, and people rediscovering Somerville.

Raritan Planner Angela Knowles noted Mayor Zachary Bray regrets not being able to attend the meeting but provided the following information for Raritan's report. Ms. Knowles reported the Crossings at Raritan (aka Block 81) will be getting its first certificate of occupancy and begin filling up the units.

The Borough is wrapping up the Raritan Sustainable Economic Development Plan initiative funded by North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority's (NJTPA) Planning for Emerging Centers Program. The consultant started work on the project a year ago at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic requiring that most of the project be done remotely including a very successful innovative interactive on-line "video game" which allowed stakeholders to provide a lot of feedback concerning the future of downtown Raritan. The Borough and consultant have now created an implementation toolbox to be used by a group of volunteers to help carry the plan's recommendations forward. In the next six to twelve months a number of short-term "tactical urbanism" pilot projects will be done to get the momentum going on Somerset Street and some of side streets including Nevius Street; more information will be forthcoming. All the work that has been done can be viewed at <http://downtownraritan.com/>.

Councilman Patente expressed appreciation for Somerset County Planning Division hosting a road safety audit in March in Raritan which resulted in a lot of good input which Mr. Patente hopes will be pursued and implemented. The Raritan Economic Development Committee has been doing a great job with the local business community; Mr. Patente will provide a list of new businesses at the next RCP meeting. The Discovering Raritan event will be held Saturday, July 31 from 4:00 to 9:00 PM and will be based on the first Discovering Raritan event held in 2019. Mr. Patente invited everyone who is available to come out to the event.

RideWise TMA Executive Director Donna Allison reported RideWise is working with Somerset County Planning Division on electrical vehicle education and outreach and held a Greenspot Mobility Workshop: Removing Barriers & Zero-Cost Solutions webinar on May 13; Ms. Allison invited everyone to visit their website <https://ridewise.org/#> and click on "Electric Vehicles" to learn more. Communities involved in the road safety study may be interested in borrowing RideWise's "speed sentry" which detects speeding vehicles by radar and can be used to collect data for use in grant applications, major projects, reports, etc. Towns interested in borrowing the speed sensor should contact RideWise. RideWise also has a parklet that was demonstrated at a Business Partnership meeting; communities can borrow the parklet to see how it works before pursuing getting a permanent parklet.

Somerset County Park Commission Secretary/Director Geoffrey Soriano reported the Park Commission has emerged from "hibernation" mode which they were in since the early period of the pandemic. They have opened up almost everything while complying with social distance requirements. The Park Commission golf course parking lots have had to be closed after reaching capacity. The Park Commission's Sunday concert series will start soon. The Park Commission is forging ahead with starting up the summer camps. Mr. Soriano added that he hopes the pandemic is now behind us.

New Jersey Office for Planning Advocacy (OPA) Principal Planner Barry Ableman reported that OPA and the State Planning Commission are working on updating the State planning rule which governs how they operate to better clarify for petitioners the Plan Endorsement renewal process which should make the process easier for the Somerset County Regional Center to participate in the Plan Endorsement renewal process. Mr. Ableman also noted that OPA continues to work with all their municipalities.

Somerset County Planning Board

Mr. Lane thanked Councilman Patente for the Road Safety Audit compliments and will pass them on to staff. Mr. Lane noted the County did a similar road safety audit in Bridgewater and that the County has been getting great feedback and the consultant will compile all this great feedback back to the towns for review before going public

in October or November. The County then hopes to take these recommendations and seek funding from NJTPA to implement some of these recommendations.

Somerset County Business Partnership

Mr. Edwards shared information on how the Business Partnership has worked with the business community during the pandemic. From March 16, 2020 to the present the Business Partnership conducted 241 program events with 9,000 attendees. The Business Partnership is looking forward to getting out to engage face-to-face with businesses and said if anyone knows of any businesses looking for increased exposure to let them know the Business Partnership will be doing more outdoor events and venues. Mr. Edwards also noted the Business Partnership held a CPR training event with the wellness group led by RWJ. Mr. Edwards reported the state has compiled statistics on the pandemic's statewide economic impact revealing that tourism in Somerset County declined 51%, visitors dropped from 3 million to 2.2 million, and the workforce dropped from 11,360 to 7,477. A much more expansive report can be found on https://visitsomersetnj.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/2020-nj-economic-impact_5-6-20.pdf.pdf

Bridgewater Township Administrator Michael Pappas reported that the Township has proposed and the Township Council approved an \$8 million bond ordinance for the universal road assessment program. The Township has engaged an engineering firm to objectively assess conditions of roads and create a plan to address in 2021. The Township is looking forward to a busy year.

Public Comment Period

There were no public comments regarding any items not on the agenda.

Adjournment

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned.

Regional Center Partnership of Somerset County

**Treasurer's Report for
March 1 thru April 30, 2021**

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Business Checking

3/1/21 thru 4/30/21

Starting Bal. as of 3/1/2021: \$6,351.38

less expenses:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Amount</u>
3/3/21	The Reitman Group	\$1,583.33
3/30/21	The Reitman Group	\$1,583.33

subtotal of expenses: **\$3,166.66**

Deposits	3/1/21 thru 4/30/21	
03/04/21	Dep from Money Market acct	\$25,000.00

subtotal of deposits **\$25,000.00**

**Ending Balance (checking)
after expenses and deposits:** **\$28,184.72**

Sum of checking and money market
accounts: **\$207,725.08**

Less total Committed But Not Expend: \$147,692.70

Uncommitted Funds **\$60,032.38**

Money Market Account

3/1/21 thru 4/30/21

Starting Bal. as of 3/1/2021: \$193,635.46

<i>Date</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Amount</i>
03/04/21	transfer to Checking	-\$25,000.00
03/12/21	Boro of Somerville	\$10,890.00
03/31/21	interest	\$7.52
04/30/21	interest	\$7.38

ending bal as of 4/30/21 **\$179,540.36**

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Table Showing Amounts Committed but Not Expended

<u>Budget Year</u>	<u>Project Initiation Year</u>	<u>Munic or RC</u>	<u>Committed Account Name</u>	<u>Current Balance</u>
2017		BW	(reserved for Bridgewater Creative Placemakg Grant)	\$15,000.00
2017	2018	RT	Raritan Ped Safety Chall Grant StreetSmart Campaign	\$5,375.00
2017	2018	RT	Raritan Ped Safety Chall Grant Traffic Striping Imp	\$4,250.00
2018	2019	RC	Allocation for Website Upgrade	\$4,001.00
2018		RC	Strategic Marketing Plan & Implementation Activities	\$30,000.00
2018	2019	RC	Strategic Initiatives	\$15,000.00
2018	2019	SV	Phase 2 Pedestrian Safety Enhancmt Challenge Grants	\$7,500.00
2020	2020	RC	Principal Marketing Services (contract Year 1)	\$3,166.70
2020	2021	BW	Resiliency & Economic Recovery Challenge Grant	\$20,000.00
2020	2020	RT	Resiliency & Economic Recovery Challenge Grant	\$20,000.00
2020	2021	SV	Resiliency & Economic Recovery Challenge Grant	\$20,000.00
2020	2021	RC	Audit and tax-related servuices for year 2020	\$3,400.00
TOTAL:				\$147,692.70

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Anticipated Revenue for 2021
(excluding interest payments from Money Mkt acct)

Somerset Co	\$65,792.25
Bridgewater	\$10,890.00
Raritan	\$10,890.00
Total Anticipated Revenue	\$87,572.25

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Treasurer's Report for
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Raritan River Rain Barrel Rebate Program
 3/1/21 thru 4/30/21

Starting Bal. as of 3/1/2021:

\$3,677.35

<u>Date</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Amount of Deductions</u>
		\$0.00

subtotal of deductions: \$0.00

ending balance after deductions \$3,677.35

Deposit (if any) | |

subtotal of any Deposits \$0.00

ending Balance after any Deposits: \$3,677.35

REGIONAL CENTER PARTNERSHIP OF SOMERSET COUNTY

Business Meeting of May 19, 2021

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89783968613>

Meeting ID: 897 8396 8613

One tap mobile

+1-929-205-6099 Access Code: 89783968613#

AGENDA

BUSINESS ITEMS

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Chair's Remarks:
4. Adoption of Meeting Minutes: March 17, 2021
5. Adoption of Treasurer's Report for March-April 2021

ACTION ITEMS

"Public comments will be entertained at this time regarding any action item. All comments shall be directed to the Chair and limited to three (3) minutes per speaker."

6. Awarding of Year 2 of Competitive Contract to Provide Principal Marketing Services

INFORMATION ITEMS

7. Marketing Update
8. Strategic Initiatives Update
9. Municipal and Other Reports

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Public comments will be entertained at this time regarding any items not on the agenda. All comments shall be directed to the Chair and limited to three (3) minutes per speaker.

Next Meeting Date: Wednesday, July 21, 2021 at 5:00PM