

**Regional Center Partnership of Somerset County
Approved
Wednesday, July 15, 2020 Meeting Minutes**

The meeting was convened by means of video conference.

Name/Organization

Voting Members

Troy Fischer, Chair, Regional Center Partnership (RCP)
Jason Dameo, Vice-Chair, RCP
Victoria Allen, RWJBarnabas Health
Anthony Tufaro, Ethicon Somerville
Matt Moench, Mayor, Bridgewater
Filipe Pedroso, Bridgewater Twp. Council
Michael Pappas, Bridgewater Administrator
Zachary Bray, Mayor, Raritan Borough
Michael Patente, Raritan Borough Council
Dennis Sullivan, Mayor, Somerville
Jane Kobuta, Somerville Borough Council
Deirdre Rosinski, Somerville Planning Board
Brian Gallagher, Somerset County (SC) Board of Chosen Freeholders
Bernie Navatto, SC Planning Board
Walter Lane, SC Planning Division
Cindie Sullivan, SC Park Commission (Alternate)

Non-Voting Guests

Barry Ableman, NJ Office of Planning Advocacy
Rich Reitman, The Reitman Group
Tim Pino, Somerset County Undersheriff

The meeting commenced at 5:00 PM

Business Items

Call to Order

RCP Chair Troy Fischer called the meeting to order.

Attendance Roll Call

Somerset County Planning Director Walter Lane read through the roll call and noted for the record the voting members that were in attendance.

Chair's Remarks

Chair Fischer welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Adoption of Meeting Minutes

Mr. Lane noted the draft meeting minutes were distributed. Chair Fischer asked if there were any corrections to the May 20, 2020 meeting minutes; there being none, Chair Fischer asked for a motion to approve the May 20, 2020 meeting minutes; Raritan Councilman Michael Patente moved and Somerville Councilwoman Jane Kobuta seconded the motion.

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

Ayes: 16
Nays: 0
Abstentions: 0

The motion to approve the minutes was approved.

Treasurer's Report for May-June 2020

Mr. Lane noted the Treasurer's Report was previously distributed. Mr. Lane summarized the Treasurer Report, noting that all three Regional Center towns have fulfilled their 2020 funding contributions to the Regional Center Partnership (RCP). On July 14 the Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders heard the Freeholder resolution authorizing the County funding support; Freeholder action to adopt the resolution is scheduled for July 28. There being no questions or comments, Chair Fischer asked for a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report for May-June 2020. Somerset County Planning Board Chair Bernie Navatto moved and Vice-Chair Jason Dameo seconded the motion.

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

Ayes: Troy Fischer, Jason Dameo, Vicky Allen, Tony Tufaro, Matt Moench, Filipe Pedroso, Michael Pappas, Zachary Bray, Michael Patente, Dennis Sullivan, Jane Kobuta, Deirdre Rosinski, Brian Gallagher, Bernie Navatto, Walter Lane and Cindie Sullivan.
Nays: none
Abstentions: none

The motion was approved.

Presentation of the New Regional Center Website

Mr. Lane presented an overview of the new website www.rcpsomersetnj.org. The Home page consists of five top menu tabs which are *About*, *Priorities*, *Resources*, *RFPs*, and *Contact*. Mr. Lane gave a brief overview of the content under each top menu tab. The content has been updated from the previous website and is presented in a more info-graphic style to be more visually pleasing. Links to each of the three Regional Center towns and Somerset County are included. Effort was made to ensure the scrolling high-profile pictures featured on the Home Page represent each Regional Center town and the Regional Center; the pictures can be changed. The Home page also features a key map, a link to the Rain Barrel Rebate Program, and links to information about the Regional Center Strategic Plan, the Suburban Disadvantage issue, and Regional Center Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Enhancement efforts. Mr. Lane advised that a link to the new website will be sent to everyone and invited everyone to provide staff with any feedback regarding the content. Mr. Lane emphasized that we cannot make any structural changes to the website but Mr. Ruggieri has been trained to make changes to the content. Mr. Lane concluded his presentation by noting that a lot of work has gone into the new website and that

hopefully everyone is pleased with the website's new look. The website has been designed by the consultant to be more mobile friendly and work on a variety of platforms.

Mr. Lane then opened up the meeting for any questions or comments. Bridgewater Mayor Matt Moench noted overall the website looks nice. Going forward, Mayor Moench requested if data such as Google Analytics could be collected on a monthly basis over a period of six months to see how many website "hits" the new website receives and which links are used the most; we could then compare this data with similar data showing the amount of activity the previous website received and determine how best to commit our marketing resources to maximize our marketing efforts. Some discussion followed. The conclusion to the discussion was that, going forward, Mr. Ruggieri will present a quick overview at each RCP meeting a summary report of the past two month's website visitation activity. Marketing consultant Rich Reitman noted he will provide Mr. Ruggieri with the analytics data from the previous website over the past few months.

Mr. Lane noted that, once any final edits are made, a press release will be issued about the new website, and then we can see how many hits the new website receives following the press release. Chair Fischer noted the beta testing of the new website confirmed the website is much more user-friendly and designed to function on a variety of devices. Mr. Lane expressed appreciation to the Marketing Committee and the consultant for a great job in helping put together the new website.

Public Comment Period

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

Action Item

Conceptual Approval of 2020 Challenge Grant Program

Mr. Lane shared that, prior to the meeting, a conceptual 2020 Challenge Grant Program proposal that had been reviewed by the Executive Committee was circulated to everyone. Back in November, it was originally contemplated to offer a broad form of Challenge Grants of \$15,000 to \$20,000 per town; however, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on the local economy, the thinking now is that the Challenge Grant program should focus on Somerset County Regional Center Strategic Plan's Resiliency and Job Growth and Private Sector Investment themes as the top priorities. In light of this, the proposal is to offer Challenge Grants of up to \$40,000 per town that would focus on helping the towns "move the needle" on Resiliency or Job Growth and Private Sector Investment type projects or initiatives; e.g., business attraction and retention; advancing at the local level one of the Somerset County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) recommendations; pursuing energy efficiency; or advancing a project from a town's municipal annex in the Somerset County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Mr. Lane summarized the grant application requirements. If acceptable to the RCP, each town would first submit a draft concept proposal for staff feedback and then submit the full grant application at the beginning of September for action to be taken at the September meeting. Towns with approved grant applications would receive half of the grant payment up front with the final half paid upon project completion. Funding cannot be used for capital improvement projects (e.g., repaving a municipal parking lot) or equipment purchases. Mr. Lane noted he received a question for clarification from Raritan Borough asking if Challenge Grant funding could be used for a tactical demonstration project such as narrowing a street width; the answer is it would be up to the RCP to determine if that was an eligible project.

Much discussion followed. Mr. Lane noted there is sufficient funding in the budget to allow \$40,000 per town to be offered. Concern was expressed that the July 29 deadline was very tight to come up with a grant proposal. Following some discussion, the conclusion was that the deadline for submitting a concept proposal will be pushed back a week and that Mr. Lane will work with Mr. Ruggieri to adjust the full grant application submission deadline accordingly.

Everyone was in agreement to proceed with the 2020 Challenge Grant Program as presented with the noted submission deadline changes. (Formal action to be taken at the September meeting to encumber the necessary program funding and approve the Challenge Grant applications.)

Information Items

Strategic Economic Development Activities Update

Mr. Lane reported there has been no movement at the state level towards adoption of any business incentives legislation. Mr. Lane noted the Somerset County Business Partnership and the Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders have formed a Long-term Recovery Task Force which just submitted a report to the Freeholders and the Business Partnership with some long-term economic recovery strategies. Chair Fischer noted there has been a lot of good discussion about different economic recovery approaches to consider in view of different possible scenarios. Mr. Fischer added that discussions with the business community has revealed how they are struggling and trying to figure out how to pull themselves up after being in lock-down mode.

Marketing Update

Marketing consultant Rich Reitman reported he has provided weekly analytics reports to staff and is waiting for access information to the new website so he can continue the weekly analytics reporting. He has also been working on the distribution list for the newsletters, completed and distributed the July newsletter, and has begun work on the September newsletter. He has also completed about 75% of the draft 2019 Annual Achievements Report which when completed will be submitted to staff for review.

Municipal and Other Reports:

Somerville Mayor Dennis Sullivan reported that, despite the impact of COVID-19, Somerville remains very active. The new multi-family 88-unit redevelopment project on Fairview Avenue on the former Litgo tract has been completed with the western building expected to be fully leased shortly. Representing a very positive change to the old industrial Litgo site, Mayor Sullivan noted the new apartments will feature the first indoor dog park in Somerset County. On Division Street a new Mediterranean-themed restaurant has opened. Mayor Sullivan reported NJDOT rejected the Borough's petition to allow the Borough to close a section of Main Street (NJ Route 28) on Saturdays to help restaurants and businesses re-open. In response the Borough reduced the portion of Main Street to be closed and resubmitted their petition to NJDOT with support from New Jersey Senator Christopher "Kip" Bateman; so far, the Borough has not received any rejection from NJDOT. Mayor Sullivan added that, if NJDOT rejects their 2nd petition, the Borough may request RCP for support to help them get over the hurdle. Freeholder Brian Gallagher noted the Borough is welcome to request support from the Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders. It was also noted that a new restaurant, possibly a steak house, is being proposed at the corner of East Main and South Bridge Streets.

Bridgewater Mayor Matt Moench reported that the impact of COVID-19 has resulted in Bridgewater experiencing a \$2 million loss in tax revenue including a loss of hotel tax revenue. This in turn has led to significant staff reduction to help close the budget gap for this year. The Township along with other towns has been very active to adopt ordinances aimed at helping businesses re-open. Mayor Moench encouraged RCP to consider ways to aggressively but respectfully capitalize on the Regional Center's record of success to help our municipalities and businesses get the flexibility they need from a regulatory standpoint and to get additional funding resources to help alleviate the hardship COVID-19 has had on residents and businesses.

Raritan Mayor Zachary Bray reported the developer of The Crossings at Raritan (Block 81) anticipates completing their redevelopment project in October. Mayor Bray noted that a number of restaurants have become innovative in creating great eating spaces for outdoor dining. The Economic Development Committee's efforts to help build the relationship with the business community has been great.

Office of the Somerset County Sheriff Somerset County Undersheriff Timothy Pino thanked everyone for the opportunity to report on current initiatives and activities by the Office of the County Sheriff. During the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic Somerset County Sheriff and Hunterdon County Sheriff officers helped provide security at Raritan Valley Community College. Somerset County Sheriff's officers have been helping patrol the County parks. On July Fourth, Sheriff officers conducted DWI enforcement. They have also been conducting numerous in-person and virtual meetings with houses of worship regarding pre-COVID 19 security issues. Sheriff officers have provided security during the recent protests which all have been peaceful. They have also been providing security in the County Administration Building and working with County employees transitioning back into the building. Undersheriff Pino thanked Mayor Moench for the invitation to attend the promotional ceremony for Paul Payne who was made Police Chief of the Township Police Department. Undersheriff Pino concluded his report by noting that if anyone needed anything from the County Sheriff's office to let him know.

Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders Somerset County Freeholder Brian Gallagher commended Bridgewater for adopting a flat rate municipal budget. Freeholder Gallagher also shared about the gradual re-opening of the County Administration Building. The Freeholders conducted a survey of County employees to try and gauge employee concerns about physically returning to the County building; no date has been set for opening the Administration Building up to the public. Freeholder Gallagher encouraged Somerville Mayor Sullivan to consider requesting the Freeholders to send a letter of support on behalf of Somerville in their petition to NJDOT to close Main Street. Mayor Sullivan noted he will reach out if there is no response from NJDOT.

New Jersey Office for Planning Advocacy (OPA) Principal Planner Barry Ableman shared about a Central Jersey Transportation Forum meeting he had just attended. Mr. Ableman noted that NJDOT Commissioner Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti commented at the meeting about NJDOT's delays in responding to petitions from several Central New Jersey towns also seeking state approval to close their "Main Streets" to help re-open local businesses. Mr. Ableman also reported the OPA is up and running and has been helping towns work through Plan Endorsement.

Public Comment Period

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

Adjournment

Before the meeting was adjourned, Chair Fischer reiterated that staff will send everyone the link to RCP's website and emphasized that the focus should be on content-oriented changes and not structural in nature. Also, the dates for submitting the thumbnail sketch and full Challenge Grant applications will be moved up as discussed during the meeting.

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned.

Regional Center Partnership of Somerset County

**Treasurer's Report for
July 1 thru August 31, 2020**

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Business Checking

7/1/20 thru 8/31/20

Starting Bal. as of 7/1/2020: \$49,128.01

less expenses:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Amount</u>
7/2/20	The Reitman Group	\$1,583.33
8/6/20	The Reitman Group	\$1,583.33
8/6/20	J Ruggieri - <i>reimbursement for NJ Div of Consumer Affairs annual filing fee</i>	\$30.00
8/6/20	Township of Bridgewater	\$7,500.00

Money Market Account

7/1/20 thru 8/31/20

Starting Bal. as of 7/1/2020: \$187,772.60

<i>Date</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Amount</i>
7/31/20	interest	\$9.44
8/18/20	Somerset County	\$65,792.25
8/31/20	interest	\$8.51

ending bal as of 8/31/20 \$253,582.80

subtotal of expenses: **\$10,696.66**

Deposits 7/1/20 thru 8/31/20

subtotal of deposits **\$0.00**

**Ending Balance (checking)
after expenses and deposits: \$38,431.35**

Sum of checking and money market
accounts: **\$292,014.15**

Less total Committed But Not Expend: \$119,459.34

Uncommitted Funds **\$172,554.81**

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**Treasurer's Report for
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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	\$30,000.00
2018	2019	RT	Phase 2 Pedestrian Safety Enhancmt Challenge Grants	\$7,500.00
2018	2019	SV	Phase 2 Pedestrian Safety Enhancmt Challenge Grants	\$7,500.00
2020	2020	RC	Principal Marketing Services (contract Year 1)	\$15,833.34
TOTAL:				\$119,459.34

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Anticipated Revenue for 2020
(excluding interest payments from Money Mkt acct)

Total Anticipated Revenue	\$0.00
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Raritan River Rain Barrel Rebate Program
7/1/20 thru 8/31/20

Starting Bal. as of 7/1/2020:

\$3,727.35

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

subtotal of deductions: \$0.00

ending balance after deductions \$3,727.35

Deposit (if any) | |

subtotal of any Deposits \$0.00

ending Balance after any Deposits: \$3,727.35

REGIONAL CENTER PARTNERSHIP OF SOMERSET COUNTY

Business Meeting of July 15, 2020

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88477632020>

Meeting ID: 884 7763 2020

One tap mobile

+19292056099,,88477632020# US (New York)

AGENDA

BUSINESS ITEMS

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Chair's Remarks:
4. Adoption of Meeting Minutes: May 20, 2020
5. Adoption of Treasurer's Report for May-June 2020

PRESENTATION:

6. New Regional Center Website

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."

7. Conceptual Approval of 2020 Challenge Grant Program

INFORMATION ITEMS

8. Strategic Economic Development Activities Update
9. Marketing Update
10. 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, September 16, 2020 at 5:00PM