

**Regional Center Partnership of Somerset County  
Approved  
Wednesday, September 16, 2020 Meeting Minutes**

The meeting was convened by means of video conference.

**Name/Organization**

**Voting Members**

Jason Dameo, Vice-Chair, RCP  
Matt Moench, Mayor, Bridgewater  
Filipe Pedroso, Bridgewater Twp. Council  
Michael Pappas, Bridgewater Administrator  
Michael Patente, Raritan Borough Council  
Angela Knowles, Raritan Borough Planner  
Nick Zamora, Raritan Borough  
Dennis Sullivan, Mayor, Somerville  
Jane Kobuta, Somerville Borough Council  
Richard St. Pierre, Somerville  
Brian Gallagher, Somerset County (SC) Board of Chosen Freeholders  
Bernie Navatto, SC Planning Board  
Walter Lane, SC Planning Division  
Geoffrey Soriano, SC Park Commission

**Non-voting County Support Staff**

James Ruggieri, SC Planning Division

**Non-Voting Guests**

Barry Ableman, NJ Office for Planning Advocacy  
Donna Allison, RideWise  
Kyle Clonan, NJ Water Supply Authority (NJWSA)  
Natalie Pineiro, Downtown Somerville Association (DSA)  
Rich Reitman, The Reitman Group

The meeting commenced at 5:00 PM

**Business Items**

**Call to Order**

Vice-Chair Jason Dameo 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**

Vice-Chair Jason Dameo welcomed everyone to the meeting.

## **Adoption of Meeting Minutes**

Vice-Chair Dameo asked if there were any corrections to the meeting minutes; there being none, Vice-Chair Dameo asked for a motion to approve the July 15, 2020 meeting minutes; Somerset County Planning Director Walter Lane moved and Somerville Local private/institutional sector representative Rick St. Pierre seconded the motion.

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

Ayes: 13  
Nays: 0  
Abstentions: 0

The motion to approve the minutes was approved.

## **Treasurer's Report for July-August 2020**

Vice-Chair Dameo asked if there were any questions or comments concerning the Treasurer Report for July-August, 2020. There being no questions or comments, Vice-Chair Dameo moved to approve the Treasurer's Report for July-August, 2020 and Somerset County Planning Board Chair Bernie Navatto seconded the motion.

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

Ayes: Jason Dameo, Matt Moench, Filipe Pedroso, Michael Pappas, Michael Patente, Angela Knowles, Dennis Sullivan, Jane Kobuta, Rick St. Pierre, Brian Gallagher, Bernie Navatto, Walter Lane and Geoff Soriano.  
Nays: none  
Abstentions: none

The motion was approved.

## **Public Comment Period**

Vice-Chair Dameo asked if anyone in the public had any comments concerning any of the Action items on the agenda (there were no public comments concerning the Action items on the agenda).

## **Action Items**

### **Raritan River Rain Barrel Rebate Program**

Mr. Ruggieri shared that in July the New Jersey Water Supply Authority (NJWSA) confirmed they can continue performing rain barrel inspections for the Raritan River Rain Barrel Rebate Program during this time of COVID-19 while maintaining social distancing practices. Mr. Ruggieri added that the Somerset County Park Commission confirmed that they can help promote the rain barrel rebate program. Mr. Ruggieri reported that, as of September 16, 2020 there is \$3,577.35 available for rain barrel rebate payments and \$150.00 for administrative-type costs for a total of \$3,727.35. The program criteria and eligible rebate amounts will remain the same. Mr. Ruggieri concluded by stating that, if there were no objections, staff requests formal action be taken to approve continuing the rain barrel rebate program through October 2021 while funding lasts.

Somerville Mayor Dennis Sullivan said several residents have asked about how they can purchase rain barrels; Mr. Ruggieri replied that there are several possible ways including ordering online or purchasing at a hardware store; they can also visit Rutgers Cooperative Extension's website to learn about how to build a rain barrel <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/E329/>.

There being no further discussion, Vice-Chair Dameo asked for a motion to continue the Raritan River Rain Barrel Rebate Program through October 2021. The motion was made by Somerville Mayor Sullivan and seconded by Mr. St. Pierre.

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

Ayes: Jason Dameo, Matt Moench, Filipe Pedroso, Michael Pappas, Andrew Fresco, Michael Patente, Angela Knowles, Dennis Sullivan, Jane Kobuta, Rick St. Pierre, Brian Gallagher, Bernie Navatto, Walter Lane and Geoff Soriano.

Nays: none

Abstentions: none

The motion was approved.

### **Approval of Challenge Grant Applications for Resiliency and Economic Recovery**

Mr. Ruggieri reported that, pursuant to the July 15 RCP meeting, all three Regional Center towns submitted conceptual proposals in early August for the Resiliency and Economic Recovery Challenge Grants. The concept proposals were reviewed and accepted by the Executive Committee. Bridgewater, Raritan and Somerville then submitted their respective Challenge Grant applications; all three are applying for the full grant amount of \$40,000.00 per town. (All three grant applications are filed in the Somerset County Planning Division and are available for review.)

#### *Raritan Challenge Grant Application: "Pop-Up Raritan"*

While Mr. Ruggieri described Raritan's grant proposal, Mr. Lane showed two map illustrations that were included in Raritan's grant application. The first map showed the proposed area for the Christmas Market and the second map showed the potential "pop-up" retail shop locations. Raritan is proposing to utilize grant funding to engage in a year-long effort that focuses on the areas around Somerset Street between the train station and the Raritan River. The proposal outlines two distinct but related events that the Borough views as part of a larger "Pop Up Raritan" initiative to reinvigorate interest in the downtown by consumers and business owners alike. These events are designed to help bring the community together, bring new economic life into the downtown, highlight the Borough's assets, and promote long-term recovery and sustainability to Somerset Street businesses.

The first component of Raritan's grant proposal focuses on what is known as a Christmas Market event to kick-off the 2020 holiday season. The grant application describes the types of features at a Christmas Market. The second component is the "Raritan Popup" which continues the grant initiative into 2021 with the Borough's Economic Development Committee (EDC) selecting two or three store fronts and soliciting applicants to set up shop for a period of six months. The EDC will work with property owners and potential vendors to secure short-term leases and then evaluate the potential for a long-term lease at the end of the 6-month period. Partnerships and matching funds include possible sponsorships from local corporations and small businesses to offset the cost of materials and to offer advertisement space throughout the Christmas Market. The Borough will also work to partner with organizations such as the Somerset County Business Partnership to offset marketing costs for both pieces of the project. The total estimated project cost is \$45,830 including in-kind services provided by the Borough.

*Somerville "SOM-POP" A Downtown Somerville Pop-up Retail Project*

In the wake of COVID 19, downtown Somerville has seen a number of businesses close and the vacancy rate mounting. To help curtail this, Somerville proposes to utilize grant funding to make quality space available for up to three new "brick and mortar" retail entrepreneurs to market their goods and identify the level of success. Partnerships include Downtown Somerville Association (DSA) who will work collaboratively with the Borough along with real estate brokers, property owners, and prospective pop-up retail tenants. The tasks include selecting a site identified by DSA, negotiating terms and conditions of a master lease, and selecting a contractor for rough outfitting of the space. The Borough's in-kind donation is valued at \$8,000 (legal reviews, construction inspections, and project administration); in addition to this, DSA is expected to contribute a combination of funding and in-kind services towards additional leasing costs, construction costs, and working with the entrepreneurs on marketing their products and advertising their goods. Mr. Ruggieri noted Somerville's conceptual proposal included a case study of a pop-up initiative in downtown Toronto, Canada which led to reducing a 17% vacancy rate to 6% over a five-year period.

*"Shop Bridgewater" Re-invigoration Project*

To help support the local business community impacted by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Township is proposing to utilize grant funding to help strengthen, promote and expand the Township-operated "Shop Bridgewater" program. Participating residents use a "Shop Bridgewater" card which tracks their card usage at participating businesses. Cardholders not only can receive a discount at the point of purchase but can also build up cash credits that they can use against their municipal property tax bill. The goals of the grant project include retaining businesses currently participating in the program, recruiting an additional 30 businesses into the program, and expanding program participation among residents. To retain businesses currently in the program, the Township will pay the monthly program participation fee for an entire year valued at \$120 per business and, if funds permit, possibly reimburse for card-reading devices. To recruit businesses into the program, the Township will conduct a multi-faceted outreach to non-participating businesses about the program and offer an incentive package to join. The Township will create a new program website or improved landing page to make program information easily accessible for residents and business owners and to give businesses owners a platform to promote business offers. The Township will also engage in a communication campaign to reach residents about the Shop Bridgewater program. The Township plans to order up to 5,000 physical "Shop Bridgewater" cards for Township residents to use.

Mr. Ruggieri noted that staff reviewed and found all three grant applications to be complete. The \$120,000 for the Challenge Grants will come out of 2020 RCP Budget and Workplan under Plan Implementation line item which has a current unencumbered balance of \$162,555.23. Bridgewater and Somerville have adopted resolutions authorizing the grant applications and Raritan is scheduled to adopt their resolution within a week. The recommendation is to approve all three Challenge Grant applications for up to \$40,000.00 per grant application with approval of Raritan's grant application contingent on submitting Raritan's resolution of authorization when adopted by Borough Council.

Some brief discussion followed. Raritan Planner Angela Knowles emphasized the linkage between the Christmas Market and Raritan Pop-up which constitute a multi-phase effort focused on the Downtown Raritan area. DSA Executive Director Natalie Pineiro noted that the proposed \$121,431 contribution from DSA represents both cash and in-kind services. Bridgewater Administrator Michael Pappas affirmed the key aspects of Bridgewater's grant proposal.

There being no further discussion, Vice-Chair Dameo asked for a motion to approve all three Resiliency and Economic Recovery Challenge Grant applications for up to \$40,000.00 per grant application. The motion was made by Mr. Navatto and seconded by Somerset County Freeholder Brian Gallagher.

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

Ayes: Jason Dameo, Matt Moench, Filipe Pedroso, Michael Pappas, Andrew Fresco, Michael Patente, Angela Knowles, Dennis Sullivan, Jane Kobuta, Rick St. Pierre, Brian Gallagher, Bernie Navatto, Walter Lane and Geoff Soriano.

Nays: none

Abstentions: none

The motion was approved.

### **Information Items**

#### **Marketing Update**

Marketing Consultant Rich Reitman reported that he added Link-in to his distribution list which resulted in approximately 600 responses. He also completed the draft 2019 Annual Achievements Report, issued the September newsletter, and began work on the November newsletter. Also, after much coordination effort with staff, The Reitman Group is now able to extract the Analytics data from the new website and, in light of this, will continue to provide staff with weekly Analytics reports.

#### **Municipal and Other Reports:**

**Somerville** Mayor Dennis Sullivan reported that a number of restaurants are offering outdoor dining. Mayor Sullivan asked if Mr. St. Pierre could report on how the restaurant community in downtown Somerville is doing given the impact of COVID-19 on the local economy. Mr. St. Pierre shared that he and the other restaurant managers are survivors and adaptors and that the DSA has been very helpful in helping promote the local restaurants in downtown Somerville. The restaurants are also preparing for colder weather and any changes in the state's COVID-19 policies. Mayor Sullivan also reported that the former Somerville Train Station building on West Veterans Memorial Drive is proposed to undergo an interior renovation to accommodate three restaurants proposed for the building. Also, the project at East Main and South Bridge Streets which is proposing two new restaurants is moving forward.

**Raritan** Planner Angela Knowles reported that the Borough is making a concerted community outreach effort especially to the non-English speaking community in connection with the Sustainable Economic Development Plan funded by the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA). The Circulation Element Update with the Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Plan is on the September Land Use Board agenda for public hearing. The Borough has received a lot of community input. The Borough is also taking steps to integrate the Raritan River Greenway with a proposed connection to a multi-purpose pathway proposed for the existing Basilone Park that will ultimately connect with a proposed bikeway along Johnson Drive. The transit-oriented residential project known as Block 81 continues to progress towards completion.

**Bridgewater** Reporting for Bridgewater Mayor Matt Moench, Township Administrator Michael Pappas reported that the Township has expanded its social media capabilities since earlier this year as part of Mayor Moench's efforts to improve transparency and responsiveness to the residents of Bridgewater. The Township is undertaking efforts to facilitate support for local struggling restaurants. Mayor Moench is a founding member of the Mayor's Main Street Alliance which has been advocating on behalf of restaurants and other small businesses. A new person is now working with the Township Department of Human Services in the capacity of a new Registered Environmental Health Specialist (REHS), who is initially focused on inspecting and assisting Township restaurants in this challenging time. Mayor Moench met with the new management company for the Bridgewater Commons Mall. Mr. Pappas also noted that maintaining and improving the condition of Township roads and infrastructure remains an important priority. The Township engaged an engineering firm that is conducting an assessment of the conditions of all Township roads. This will be an important and helpful tool in planning for future road improvement projects.

**Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders** Somerset County Freeholder Brian Gallagher praised the DSA for their “Show Your Local Love” event in August in support of the local business and restaurant community in Somerville. Freeholder Gallagher also shared that the Board of Chosen Freeholders are very pleased to have selected Borough of Fanwood Mayor Colleen Mahr to succeed Somerset County Administrator Michael Amorosa as County Administrator when he retires at the end of the year. Ms. Mahr is now serving as the new Deputy County Administrator. Freeholder Gallagher added that Ms. Mahr brings many years of executive management experience in government and business. Freeholder Gallagher said he and the Board of Chosen Freeholders look forward to working with her and encouraged everyone to join him in congratulating Ms. Mahr.

**RideWise TMA** Executive Director Donna Allison reported that RideWise supported Bridgewater in completing their *Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel Plan: Safe Routes to Schools, Parks and Trails* plan and is pleased to have nominated the plan for a Somerset County Land Development Award in the Excellence in Planning Category. RideWise and Somerset County Planning Division had a virtual meeting with DSA Executive Director Natalie Piniero in July to connect her with resources to help create parklets for downtown dining. RideWise is working with the Somerset County Park Commission to schedule small, socially distant bicycle safety sessions at one of the parks. RideWise has been in contact with Burlington Coat Factory to assist with employee travel needs to the new location at the Somerville Circle. Ms. Allison noted that RideWise is happy to work with Somerville on a second Street Smart campaign. Discussions for a second campaign began last March but the planning was put on hold after the COVID-19 shut down.

**NJ Office for Planning Advocacy** Principal Planner Barry Ableman shared that the Office for Planning Advocacy is operating and continuing their work with municipalities. Mr. Ableman pointed out that the Business Action Center (BAC) is available to help businesses deal with their growth and contraction, especially during the COVID-19 crisis. Pursuant to this, Mr. Ableman said he would provide a link to the BAC: <https://nj.gov/state/bac/>

### **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  
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

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**

**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****

**Regional Center Partnership of Somerset County**

**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
<b>TOTAL:</b>				<b>\$119,459.34</b>



**Regional Center Partnership of Somerset County**

**Treasurer's Report for  
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Anticipated Revenue for 2020  
(excluding interest payments from Money Mkt acct)

Total Anticipated Revenue	\$0.00
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**Regional Center Partnership of Somerset County**  
**Treasurer's Report for**  
**July 1 thru August 31, 2020**  
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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</u> <u>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 September 16, 2020

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86706351718>

Meeting ID: 867 0635 1718

One tap mobile

+19292056099,, 86706351718# US (New York)

### AGENDA

#### BUSINESS ITEMS

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Chair's Remarks:
4. Adoption of Meeting Minutes: July 15, 2020
5. Adoption of Treasurer's Report for July-August 2020

#### 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. Raritan River Rain Barrel Rebate Program
7. Approval of Challenge Grant Applications for Resiliency and Economic Recovery

#### INFORMATION ITEMS

8. Marketing 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: Thursday November 12, 2020 at 5:00PM