

**Regional Center Partnership of Somerset County  
Approved Wednesday, July 21, 2021 Meeting Minutes**

The meeting was convened by means of video conference.

**Name/Organization**

**Voting Members**

Troy Fischer, Chair, 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  
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  
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 Troy Fischer asked if there were any corrections to the meeting minutes; there being none, Chair Troy Fischer asked for a motion to approve the May 19, 2021 meeting minutes. Vice-Chair Jason Dameo moved and Somerset County Planning Director Walter Lane seconded the motion.

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

Ayes: 12

Nays: 0

Abstentions: 0

The motion to approve the minutes was approved.

### **Treasurer's Report for May-June 2021**

Mr. Ruggieri noted the Treasurer Report was distributed to everyone with the meeting reminder. Mr. Ruggieri reported that Suplee Clooney & Company completed the audit report for the year ending December 31, 2020 and found everything to be in order. Copies of the audit report are available for anyone interested in reviewing the report. As per the contract, they also completed IRS Form 990 and provided the information for filing the state return (NJ CRI-200).

Mr. Ruggieri further reported that to date Raritan and Somerville have paid their funding contributions for the year, thereby fulfilling their obligation to the Regional Center Partnership adopted budget and workplan. The County Board of Commissioners resolution authorizing the County funding support is on the Regular Work Agenda for next week for approval. An invoice was sent to Bridgewater and we are waiting for the Township's contribution.

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 May-June 2021. Bridgewater Mayor Matt Moench moved and Somerset County Planning Board Chair Bernie Navatto seconded the motion.

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

Ayes: Troy Fischer, Vicky Allen, Tony Tufaro, Matt Moench, Filipe Pedroso, Zachary Bray, Michael Patente, Dennis Sullivan, Bernie Navatto, Walter Lane and Chris Edwards.

Nays: none

Abstentions: none

The motion was approved.

### **Action Items**

There were no action items on the agenda.

### **Information Items**

#### **Marketing Update**

Marketing consultant Rich Reitman reported the July newsletter was completed and issued; he is working with staff to complete the Annual Achievements Report for 2020; issued the latest Rain Barrel Rebate Program press release; reviewed website content for needed updates; prepared weekly, monthly and quarterly Analytics reports;



updated the posting on Facebook; and is currently working to update the press release regarding the successful effort to address the Suburban Disadvantage issue.

Some discussion followed regarding press coverage about the recent Suburban Disadvantage achievement in which Governor Phil Murphy signed into law the rules legislation for administering the New Jersey Economic Recovery Act of 2020 including the Emerge program. Bridgewater Mayor Matt Moench commented that, since RCP is the lead agency for the Suburban Disadvantage initiative, that at a minimum RCP Chair Fischer should take the lead in promoting our own efforts and, in light of this, was surprised to see the County issue its own press release on July 1 ahead of any press from RCP. Mr. Lane noted that there is plenty of opportunity for everyone to take credit for this achievement and that one of the main reasons for updating the press release is to be able to include a quote from the three Regional Center mayors if they wanted to contribute to the press release.

There being no further discussion, Mr. Ruggieri reported he recently shared with the Marketing Committee the following general website observations he noticed based on a cursory review of the past six months of Analytics data for 2021 by comparing the first and second quarterly reports (January 1-March 30 and May 1 - June 30) prepared by Mr. Reitman. Mr. Ruggieri noted that his review was by no means exhaustive nor highly technical in nature but just to see if there were any broad indicators. In terms of website visitation, the first quarter saw somewhat more website visits than the second quarter; Mr. Ruggieri surmised that perhaps this correlates with the change in seasons as people are inclined to spend more time outdoors as the weather gets warmer. In terms of devices used to access the website, the desktop was by far the most common type of device used for both quarters although desktop usage decreased in the second quarter; by comparison, using a mobile device to access the website increased from the first quarter to the second quarter. In terms of which pages were most visited, the Rain Barrel Rebate Program received the most pageviews during both quarters which would seem to correlate with the uptick in the number of rain barrel rebate applications made so far this year compared to all of last year. The second and third most popular webpages visited were “Newsletters” and “Meetings” respectively.

Following Mr. Ruggieri’s report, Mayor Moench indicated he would like to receive the weekly Analytics reports as he is interested in seeing the data to get an idea if the Regional Center Partnership is reaching the community through these means of communication. Mr. Ruggieri noted he would be pleased to forward the weekly Analytics reports to Mayor Moench. Following some brief discussion, Mr. Lane said if anyone is interested in receiving the weekly Analytics reports to let Mr. Ruggieri know.

Regarding Regional Center Partnership’s Facebook page, Mayor Moench noted that there were no new postings from a posting in May to when the July newsletter was recently posted which is a long interval to not have any new postings for the number of RCP Facebook followers and that if there cannot be more regular updates then we may want to consider if using Facebook is the best use of RCP’s resources to reach the community.

### **Strategic Initiatives (Suburban Disadvantage Part 2) Update**

Somerset County Business Partnership President & CEO Chris Edwards described some of the work undertaken to address the “suburban disadvantage” issue regarding the allocation of state business retention and attraction incentives. As previously reported, in analyzing the New Jersey Economic Recovery Act of 2020 (ERA) which was signed into law by Governor Phil Murphy in January 2021, the Somerset County Business Partnership found that the provisions in the new legislation still contained a distinct “suburban disadvantage” in regard to how the state would award incentives between the state’s larger urban areas and suburban areas like the Somerset County Regional Center. It was recognized that, with the passing of ERA in January, there was a unique opportunity for the Somerset County Regional Center to influence revised or replacement business incentives legislation. In January of 2021, the NJ Economic Development Authority was granted six months to craft rules and regulations governing program requirements, application processes, fees, and other administrative aspects of the Emerge Program. The “rule-making process” presented an opportunity to comment particularly where there was room for interpretation of legislative intent. Through our meetings with the Regional Center Partnership, it was decided that, in order to achieve our desired outcome, the focus would be on one “ask” instead of targeting multiple solutions.



This one “ask” focused on the legislation defining “incentive area” shown in the attached slide. Over the past six months representatives from the Somerset County Regional Center, Somerset County and County Business Partnership staff communicated with state and local elected officials to advocate for the removal of the language with the “one-half mile radius” of a transit station qualifier which directly blocks the entire Regional Center from being an incentive area. Mr. Edwards was pleased to report that on July 2 Governor Murphy signed the rules legislation for the Emerge Program. In that legislation, the language for “Incentive area” now reads as *“Incentive area” means ... (d) an area designated pursuant to the “State Planning Act,” P.L.1985, c.398 (C.52:18A-196 et seq.), as Planning Area 1 (Metropolitan), Planning Area 2 (Suburban), Planning Area 3 (Fringe Planning Area); or a Designated Center under the State Development and Redevelopment Plan.* With the elimination of the qualifiers that were in the original legislation, the entire Somerset County Regional Center is now in the Emerge Program Incentive area.

Discussion followed. The consensus was that the outcome of this long effort represents a huge win for the Regional Center and Somerset County as well as all other similar suburban areas across the entire state. Chair Fischer noted the successful outcome of this effort exceeded our expectations. While urban centers like Jersey City and Newark will always be granted more incentives, the new legislation signed by Governor Murphy greatly narrows the gap between urban centers and suburban areas of the state. Mr. Lane noted that under the previous program the parity in incentive offerings between urban and suburban areas amounted to \$10,000 whereas now under the new legislation it is only a few thousand dollars. Chair Fischer added that the Somerset County Regional Center now has the opportunity to show businesses how much the Regional Center and Somerset County have to offer. The goal was never to take incentive assistance away from the state’s urban centers but rather that state program incentives be more uniformly applied statewide. Mr. Navatto expressed appreciation to former Somerset County Business Partnership President and CEO Mike Kerwin, former Somerset County Business Partnership Vice Chair for Economic Development John Maddocks, and Mr. Edwards for all their work to help achieve the desired results, adding that this shows that since the Regional Center Partnership was formed how we can accomplish more working together than working individually.

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

**Raritan** Mayor Zachary Bray reported that “Michael’s” eatery has a new owner and recently re-opened on Thompson Street. On June 1 a new Italian restaurant opened on Somerset Street. On July 31 the Raritan Economic Development Committee is having the Discover Raritan community event on West Somerset Street with food, drink and live entertainment. Mayor Bray invited everyone to attend, adding that the first Discover Raritan event was held in 2019 but not in 2020 due to COVID-19. Mayor Bray also shared that on August 5 at 10:30 AM a ribbon cutting for the Raritan Crossing residential project on Second Avenue will be held; a formal invitation from the Borough will be sent out.

Raritan Councilman Michael Patente also reported that several new businesses recently opened in Raritan including Mary Lou Photography, Hummingbird Studio, and Riverwalk Physical Therapy. Councilman Patente added that the Discover Raritan event is being funded by the Regional Center Partnership Resiliency and Economic Recovery Challenge Grant and will have over 50 vendors most who are from Raritan including local restaurants; there will also be a variety of family entertainment.

**Bridgewater** Mayor Moench shared that on August 14 there will be two important community events. There will be a ceremony commemorating longtime Bridgewater resident and distinguished World War II veteran Bob Vaucher will be held. Mayor Moench noted that Mr. Voucher, who had just turned 102, was very instrumental in so many things involving the township, including the location for the Bridgewater-Raritan High School and establishment of the Bridgewater Police Department. A flyover will be part of the ceremony.

Also on August 14 the centennial celebration of Hobbstown will be held. Located off North Bridge Street and Prince Rodgers Drive, Hobbstown is one of the first prominent African American settlements in Bridgewater; the original ceremony had to be postponed in 2020 due to COVID-19. Details of Hobbstown’s history can be found on the Township’s website.



Mayor Moench also reported that the Township has been reviewing the budget and that the Township's 2021 RCP funding contribution will be forthcoming.

Bridgewater Administrator Michael Pappas reported that on September 12, in conjunction with the Shimon and Sara Birnbaum Jewish Community Center, the Township will be hosting its annual community day; Mr. Pappas expressed appreciation to Chair Fischer and the ownership of Bridgewater Commons for hosting the event in the mall parking lot. Mr. Pappas also reported that from September 12 thru the 19<sup>th</sup> the Township will be hosting Restaurant Week which is part of the Re-invigorate Shop Bridgewater initiative being funded through a RCP Resiliency and Economic Recovery Challenge Grant; the Township hopes this will become an annual event and looks forward to everyone stopping by to visit the Township's restaurants that week.

Bridgewater Township Councilman Filipe Pedroso also shared that Bridgewater resident Bob Vaucher worked on many things that related to Raritan and Somerville including establishment of the Bridgewater-Raritan Board of Education and the Township's purchase of the lands for the location of the Bridgewater-Raritan High School. Councilman Pedroso also described how Mr. Vaucher had a pivotal role in getting Raritan Valley Community College formed and that his contacts with Doris Duke and the Duke Estate led to the Duke Estate donating the lands for the location of Raritan Valley Community College.

**Somerville** Mayor Dennis Sullivan shared that at Bob Vaucher's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday two years ago Mayor Sullivan had the honor of presenting Mr. Vaucher with an honorary proclamation for his years of service as an active member of Somerville's volunteer fire department. Somerville's Memorial Day Ceremony included a flyover in honor of Mr. Vaucher. Mayor Sullivan added that Mr. Vaucher will be much missed by the Regional Center.

On August 3<sup>rd</sup> Somerville will host the National Night Out at Carol Pager Park on Green Street and all invited with hot dogs and ice cream to be served. The Tour of Somerville bicycle race event will be held on Labor Day this year and will begin with a family bike race in the morning; Unity Bank has stepped up to be major sponsor of the event. Regarding the Somerset Station transit-oriented development behind the train station, developer Pulte Homes will be having an open house ribbon cutting event later in August and has already sold about 35 townhouse units to date. The Somerville Town Center West Main Street parking deck is moving ahead. On East Veterans Memorial Drive the Station House project is leasing units and expects to have a ribbon cutting soon. Mayor Sullivan added that Somerville is making great strides in its comeback since last year, that there is a lot of energy and optimism, and that he is looking forward to an exciting fall season, a holiday season, and the return of St. Patrick's Day Parade next spring. Mayor Sullivan thanked the RCP for helping the business community through the difficult summer of 2020.

### **Somerset County Park Commission**

Somerset County Park Commission Secretary/Director Geoffrey Soriano reported that a tragic event happened last Sunday at Duke Island Park involving a sex assault. Mr. Soriano has been in contact with the County Prosecutor and the County Park Commission; an investigation is continuing with the suspect at large. Mr. Soriano added that he regrets having to share this kind of information but felt it was important to inform the RCP given that the event will be reported in the news and occurred in Bridgewater just outside the Regional Center. Chair Fischer thanked Mr. Soriano for sharing the information.

### **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  
May 1 thru June 30, 2021**

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**Business Checking**

5/1/21 thru 6/30/21

Starting Bal. as of 5/1/2021: \$28,184.72

less expenses:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Amount</u>
5/13/21	The Reitman Group	\$1,583.33
5/13/21	RWJ Somerset-Healthier Somerset	\$100.00
6/10/21	J Ruggieri reimbursement for NJ Div of Revenue annual report filing fee	\$58.00
06/10/21	The Reitman Group	\$1,583.37

subtotal of expenses: **\$3,324.70**

Deposits 5/1/21 thru 6/30/21

subtotal of deposits **\$0.00**

**Ending Balance (checking)  
after expenses and deposits: **\$24,860.02****

Sum of checking and money market  
accounts: **\$215,305.81**

Less total Committed But Not Expend: \$163,526.00

Uncommitted Funds **\$51,779.81**

**Money Market Account**

5/1/21 thru 6/30/21

Starting Bal. as of 5/1/2021: \$179,540.36

<u>Date</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Amount</u>
5/31/21	interest	\$7.62
6/1/21	Raritan Borough	\$10,890.00
6/30/21	interest	\$7.81
<b>ending bal as of 6/30/21</b>		<b>\$190,445.79</b>

**Regional Center Partnership of Somerset County**

**Treasurer's Report for  
May 1 thru June 30, 2021**

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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	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 services for year 2020	\$3,400.00
2021	2021	RC	Principal Marketing Services (contract Year 2)	\$19,000.00
<b>TOTAL:</b>				<b>\$163,526.00</b>

**Regional Center Partnership of Somerset County**

**Treasurer's Report for  
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Anticipated Revenue for 2021  
(excluding interest payments from Money Mkt acct)

Somerset Co	\$65,792.25
Bridgewater	\$10,890.00

Total Anticipated Revenue	\$76,682.25
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Regional Center Partnership of Somerset County  
Treasurer's Report for  
May 1 thru June 30, 2021  
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Raritan River Rain Barrel Rebate Program  
5/1/21 thru 6/30/21

Starting Bal. as of 5/1/2021:

\$3,677.35

<u>Date</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Amount of Deductions</u>
5/13/21	rebate payment	\$50.00
5/13/21	rebate payment	\$50.00
5/13/21	rebate payment	\$100.00
5/13/21	rebate payment	\$50.00

subtotal of deductions: \$250.00

**ending balance after deductions**

\$3,427.35

Deposit (if any) | |

subtotal of any Deposits \$0.00

**ending Balance after any Deposits:**

\$3,427.35

# REGIONAL CENTER PARTNERSHIP OF SOMERSET COUNTY

## Business Meeting of July 21, 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: May 19, 2021
5. Adoption of Treasurer's Report for May-June 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."*

#### INFORMATION ITEMS

6. Marketing Update
7. Strategic Initiatives (Suburban Disadvantage Part 2) Update
8. 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, September 09, 2021 at 5:00PM in County Engineering Conference Room**




The Suburban Disadvantage  
Emerge Program

## What We Accomplished

### **"Murphy approves tax break 'clean-up' bill ahead of July 4 weekend" - NJBIZ**

"Incentive area" means ... (d) an area designated pursuant to the "State Planning Act," P.L. 1985, c. 398 (C.52:18A-196 et seq.), as Planning Area 1 (Metropolitan), Planning Area 2 (Suburban), Planning Area 3 (Fringe Planning Area); or a Designated Center under the State Development and Redevelopment Plan; [~~provided an area designated as Planning Area 2 (Suburban) or Planning Area 3 (Fringe Planning Area) or a Designated Center shall be located within a one-half mile radius of the mid-point, with bicycle and pedestrian connectivity, of a New Jersey Transit Corporation, Port Authority Transit Corporation, or Port Authority Trans-Hudson Corporation rail, bus, or ferry station, including all light rail stations, or a high frequency bus stop as certified by the New Jersey Transit Corporation.~~]

 Somerset County  
Business Partnership