

**Regional Center Partnership of Somerset County
Draft
Wednesday, May 18, 2022 Meeting Minutes**

The meeting was convened by means of video conference.

Name/Organization

Voting Members in Attendance

Jason Dameo, Vice Chair RCP
Anthony Tufaro, Johnson & Johnson
Matthew Moench, Mayor, Bridgewater
Michael Pappas, Bridgewater Administrator
Nick Zamora,
Dennis Sullivan, Mayor, Somerville
Thompson Mitchell, Somerville Borough Council
Rick St. Pierre, Somerville
Paul Drake, Somerset County (SC) Board of County Commissioners
Bernie Navatto, SC Planning Board
Walter Lane, SC Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development
Geoffrey Soriano, SC Park Commission

Non-voting County Support Staff in Attendance

Angela Knowles, Somerset County Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development

Non-Voting Guests in Attendance

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 Vice-Chair Jason Dameo called the meeting to order.

Attendance Roll Call

Deputy Director Angela Knowles read through the roll call and noted for the record the voting members that were in attendance.

Chair's Remarks

RCP Vice-Chair Jason Dameo welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Adoption of Meeting Minutes

RCP Vice-Chair Jason Dameo asked if there were any corrections to the meeting minutes; there being none, Vice-Chair Jason Dameo asked for a motion to approve the March 16, 2022 meeting minutes. Somerville Borough representative Rick St. Pierre moved and Vice Chair Jason Dameo seconded the motion.

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

Ayes:	9
Nays:	0
Abstentions:	2

The motion to approve the minutes was approved.

Treasurer's Report for March-April 2022

Ms. Knowles reported that there hadn't been any activity with our accounts since the last meeting and that she would be happy to answer any questions. Mr. Navatto suggested combining the March/April and May/June reports for the May meeting. Ms. Knowles agreed to proceed in that way.

There being no questions or comments and no action needing to be taken, the Committee moved on to the next item.

Action Item

Authorization to Release RFP thru the Competitive Contracting Process for Principal Marketing Services

(Marketing consultant Rich Reitman was moved into a "waiting room" before any discussion commenced about the Authorization to Release RFP through the Competitive Contracting Process for Principal Marketing Services agenda item.)

Ms. Knowles reported that the Marketing Committee met in March and discussed a number of changes needed to the Scope of Work for the Request for Proposals (RFP) to include more "tech-savvy" skillsets. Will be ready for review at the next meeting in July. Ms. Knowles also indicated that the Marketing Committee considered extending Mr. Reitman's contract for another 2-3 months to cover the time that the committee will need to make the changes.

Mr. Navatto commented that he agreed the Scope needed some changes and agreed with extending Mr. Reitman's contract for another three (3) months and that another committee meeting should be set to discuss the recommended changes. Mr. Navatto made a motion to that effect. Mr. St. Pierre seconded the motion to extend Mr. Reitman's contract for three (3) months.

Discussion followed. Mr. Lane added that this is a large departure from the last scope and we wanted the Marketing Committee to review the changes before sending it to the full board. He indicated the workload of the Office at the moment and asked for the Partnership's understanding in our timing on this.

Mr. Navatto added that taking our time is the best way forward since significant changes will be made. Ms. Knowles responded that she would quickly schedule another marketing committee meeting to discuss the changes.

Mayor Moench asked if the marketing contract is set up so that we can extend it without a bidding process. Mr. Navatto responded that we are a 501c(3) and do not need to go out to bid for this contract. Mayor Moench was satisfied with the procedure and indicated he would vote no to extend the contract, that it is time to move on.

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

Ayes: 9
Nays: 2
Abstentions: 0

The motion to extend Mr. Reitman’s contract for three (3) months was approved.

Ms. Knowles indicated for the record that Commissioner Paul Drake arrived at the meeting at 5:10pm and Mr. Lane re-admitted Mr. Reitman into the meeting.

Information Items

Plan Endorsement Renewal Update:

Ms. Knowles indicated that the County had a meeting with the NJ State Office of Planning Advocacy (OPA) in March. The County provided OPA with feedback on each of the towns and it is now with the State to review. Ms. Knowles acknowledged Barry Ableman (NJ OPA) and asked him to say a few words. Mr. Ableman reported that he and Donna Rendiero (Executive Director, NJ OPA) have gone through the material and that they are using us as a “test case” for a “new and improved” plan endorsement process. Mr. Ableman will draft a letter for Ms. Rendiero to send letter to say that we are eligible to go through the expedited renewal process.

There being no questions or comments and no action needing to be taken, the Committee moved on to the next item.

Municipal and Other Reports:

Somerville Councilman Mitchell did not have any comments. Mr. St. Pierre reported on the various summer events coming up: Summer Stage, Classic Cruisers, Memorial Day Bike Race, Legal Run Around for Law Foundation. All can be found on the Downtown Somerville Facebook Page. Councilman Mitchell added that there will be a Memorial Day Service at Cemetery at 11am.

Raritan Nick Zamora (Espo’s), reported that the Borough is looking forward to its 3rd Annual Discovering Raritan event in July.

Bridgewater Mayor Matt Moench reported that they held Community Day with the JCC and a Founders Day that they hope to build on as a spring event. March 11th marked the ribbon cutting for a newly renovated innovation center at Neuron, a Chemical Company, on Finderne Avenue. They employ 8,000 workers worldwide and we welcome them to Bridgewater.

Somerset County Park Commission Mr. Soriano report that the 4th of July Fireworks at North Branch Park are back and that the Rose Day Festival in Franklin Township will be coming up. Reported on the issue in Raritan last month where there was a Canal breach. Canal was flowing into the river 700ft above the spillway. They received an estimate to repair it for \$190,000, however the Park Commission was able to repair it in-house with about \$9,000 of materials. Canal path is back open.

Somerset County Planning Board Mr. Lane reported on the Planning Board adopting the Preservation Plan at its May meeting. The Preservation Plan is three plans in one (Farmland, Open Space and Historic Preservation) which is believed to be the first of its kind. The plan includes topics on Heritage Tourism, Eco Tourism, Agri-Tourism, and preservation strategies for climate change mitigation. It is a comprehensive document. We are excited about its adoption and moving toward implementation. The Board received resolutions of support from many partnering organizations. Mr. Lane stated that we will “shop around” for any awards possible.

RideWise Executive Director Donna Allison reported on EV education event in Bridgewater and an EV and first responders event in Hillsborough in July. RideWise is partnering with Damien Stackhouse to put on a Bicycle Rodeo in Bridgewater, and a helmet drive. In Raritan they have distributed a survey to ID future locations for bike racks. In Somerville on Earth Day, RideWise constructed a parklet in front of Starbucks with a goal to show that you don't need too much to make a parklet work. RideWise will be at the Tour de Somerville in front of Pops Cycles.

Vice Chair Dameo added a personal note about the 200 Club luncheon which supports police, fire, rescue, EMS. They had about 350 people in attendance and awarded 10 scholarships of \$2,500 and one of \$5,000 and distributed 45 Valor awards. Bill Spadea was the guest speaker. Please let Mr. Dameo know if anyone wants to attend in the future.

Adjournment

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned.