

**Regional Center Partnership of Somerset County
Wednesday, March 18, 2023,
Meeting Minutes**

The meeting was convened by means of video conference.

Name/Organization

Voting Members in Attendance

Troy Fischer, Chair
Anthony Tufaro, Johnson & Johnson
Vicky Allen, RWJ Barnabas

Filipe Pedroso, Bridgewater Twp. Council
Michael Pappas, Bridgewater
Andrew Fresco, Bridgewater

Nicolas Carra, Raritan Borough Council
Stanley Schrek, Raritan Borough Engineer

Dennis Sullivan, Mayor, Somerville
Thompson Mitchell, Somerville Council
Rick St. Pierre, Somerville
Walter Lane, SC Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development

Geoffrey Soriano, SC Park Commission
Janine Erickson, SC Park Commission Alternate

Non-voting County Support Staff

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

Non-Voting Guests

Barry Abelman, NJ Office for Planning Advocacy
Courtenay Mercer, Mercer Planning Associates
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 Community Planner Erika Phillips 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.

Action Items

Adoption of Meeting Minutes

Chair Troy Fischer asked if there were any corrections to the meeting minutes; there being none he asked for a motion to approve the Jan.18, 2023, meeting minutes, Director Walter Lane moved, and Raritan Councilman Nicolas Carra 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 January /February 2023

Principal Community Planner Erika Phillips presented the January and February 2023 treasurer's report. She gave an overview and explanation of expenditures and deposits. She asked if there were any questions or comments concerning the Treasurer Report. There being no questions, comments, or corrections Chair Fischer made a motion to approve the January and February 2023 Treasurer's Reports. Rick St. Pierre moved the motion, and Somerville Mayor Dennis Sullivan seconded the motion.

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

Ayes:	13
Nays:	0
Abstentions:	0

The motion was approved.

Information Items

Review Draft Version of Annual Report and Website Update from MPA:

Courtenay Mercer of Mercer Planning Associates presented to the group the draft version of the Annual Report that she and her team had developed from gathered information. She explained to the members that Annual Report will become its own webpage. She explained that the actual intention of the website is to limit the number of pdf documents and text. Andrew Fresco stated that the report was very word heavy and needed more graphics. Courtenay noted that events are good to add in and encouraged all the towns to submit photos and new logos for the report. She emphasized that they needed better quality and high-resolution logos. The next goal was to meet with the Marketing Committee to really gain a better understanding of the next level marketing and communications strategy for the group.

State Plan Endorsement:

Barry Ableman of New Jersey OPA laid out to the group what the State of NJ would be looking for in the update of the Plan Endorsement. He reiterated that the Planning and Implementation Agreements (PIA) had been sent out to each of the towns and that each one should have received them. Most members responded that they had received the PIA. The next goal was the double back with each of the towns to see where they are in the process.

Strategic Vision for 2023

Deputy Director Knowles noted at the last meeting that the goals for 2023 are based on the Strategic Plan adopted in 2018. Some of those overarching goals were reflected in the areas of health and wellness, resiliency, job growth, private sector investment and embracing the Raritan River. She stated that the goal is to form a working group which will go through these priorities and create a path forward for implementation. There was some discussion of the working group being the marketing group that is currently in place and or using that group or developing a subgroup. The goals will be circulated among the small group to gather thoughts, and by the next meeting these outcomes will be used to discuss how we move forward. It was mentioned that Courtenay (MPA) might be able to help guide the group in the right direction. Deputy Director Knowles said that we needed to get volunteers to participate. It was also suggested that the marketing group be the core group to talk with MPA about past present and future visioning so that this information can be brought to the larger group (board). An email and or letter will be sent out to the group with formal requests for comments. Some people had already expressed interest and the idea would be reach out to those that expressed interest and form the group from those people.

Municipal Updates:

Somerville: St. Patty's Day parade will occur this year. Redevelopment projects include Main Street, Avalon Bay Ribbon Cutting. Town homes are continuing to sell. There was an update on the Baker and Taylor site and they are doing demolition and salvaging as much as possible. The DSA continues to meet. They have a new website and logo along with visioning workshops on streetscapes and long-term visioning. It is being done in stages, zones and in different areas. Tour de Somerville will be held May 29th.

Bridgewater: Grand opening of DIG IN, farm to table restaurant with healthy options. Similar to Chipotle for vegan/ vegetarians. Summit Medical Center moving into the old Crate and Barrel Store. Spring Carnival on 4/8, Founders Day on 5/20. Road improvement plan ongoing with 8 million dollars allocated for 2023. Also noted that they will be having enhanced policing and the Community Outreach SHIELD program.

Raritan: Public hearing for Raritan Crossing (75 Units, 12 affordable units) Raritan mall under contract. TAP grant and streetscape /wayfinding under Environmental review. Orlando Drive Apartments has had the builder

take over the project. There has been some discussion with the County and Duke Farms regarding two Duke buildings. There was also some concerns for connection of the greenway. Talks are still underway.

Public Comment Period:

Rick St. Pierre requested that we revisit the Suburban Disadvantage. Director Lane noted that the changes that we asked for were made. The group pondered whether there was a need to promote new incentives. For next meeting want to do an overview of where we ended up.

Adjournment

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned.

Meeting adjourned at 5:45