

Regional Center Partnership of Somerset County

Wednesday, May 17, 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
Matt Moench, Mayor, Bridgewater

Nicolas Carra, Raritan Borough Council
Nick Zamora, Raritan Borough
Zachary Bray, Mayor, Raritan

Dennis Sullivan, Mayor, Somerville
Thompson Mitchell, Somerville Council
Rick St. Pierre, Somerville
Deidre Rosinski, Somerville

Paul Drake, County Commissioner, Somerset County
Bernie Navatto, Planning Board Chair, Somerset County

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 Mar.15, 2023, meeting minutes, Somerville representative Rick St.Pierre moved, and Somerset County Parks Commission Director Geoff Soriano seconded the motion.

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

Ayes:	15
Nays:	0
Abstentions:	0

The motion to approve the minutes was approved.

Treasurer's Report for March /April 2023

Principal Community Planner Erika Phillips presented the March and April 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 March and April 2023 Treasurer's Reports. Somerville Mayor, Dennis Sullivan moved the motion, and SC Planning Board Chair, Bernie Navatto seconded the motion.

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

Ayes:	15
Nays:	0
Abstentions:	0

The motion was approved.

Information Items

Marketing Committee Strategy and Website Update from MPA:

Courtenay Mercer of Mercer Planning Associates presented to the group. She informed them that she, Angela Knowles and Erika Phillips had met via Zoom to discuss next steps based on RCP discussions at the last meeting. After hearing what was said and discussions with the administrative group, she recommended a shift in the communication strategy for the RCP to better align with the strategic plan. She suggested focusing on the four priorities/themes (health and wellness, resiliency, embracing the Raritan River, and job growth and private investment. In addition, she suggested that we target three main audience groups: RCP members, stakeholder groups and the general public. She also recommended using a web-based format for the newsletter and creating long-form informational articles to be shared on the website and social media. The goals are to create evergreen content that draws organic traffic to the website. 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:

Erika Phillips started a discussion to see how the towns were doing with their preparation of the 2023 Plan Implementation Agreement (PIA) for the State Plan Endorsement Process. 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 PIA's had been sent out to each of the towns and that each one should have received them. He noted and that the information that needs to be gathered and provided back the State, so that they, and other state agencies can see how each town has operated within their current PIA. 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.

Municipal Updates:

Somerville: Mayor Sullivan Two Ribbon Cuttings were announced: Slingin' Dogs hot dog shop and Sticks Cigar Shop opened in Somerville. In addition, Albadani Restaurant will be opening soon. Girls Night Out in Downtown Somerville had over \$1K in ticket sales. May 29th Bike Race will also be held in Somerville. Big Ribbon Cutting June 14th of Avalon Bay. City Council has designated a conditional developer for site at the old Pizza Hut. The DSA has initiated new banners with logos to decorate the town for the Memorial Day Tour of Somerville on May 29th.

Bridgewater: Mayor Moench Founders Day this weekend 5/20-5/21. New ownership of the Bridgewater Mall Mayor Moench expressed interest in welcoming and working with new owners. The mayor made it clear that he is not interested in large scale multifamily projects for the mall. Bridgewater is doing work to develop more on the Master Plan and noted that a complete overhaul of the plan has not happened in a while.

Raritan: Mayor Bray and Nick Carra: Raritan will move its borough hall to a new location in downtown with 32 new parking spaces. Raritan has also secured moving its Farmers Market to Washington School Regional Farmers Market.

SC Parks Commission: Geoff Soriano: There will be Equine Activities on June 3rd Open House, June 3rd Flower Activities-Rose Day Festival, July 4th Food Trucks at North Branch Park. Sunday Summer Concerts at 6:30 Duke Island Park.

Public Comment Period:

Adjournment

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned.

Meeting adjourned at 5:45