

**Regional Center Partnership of Somerset County  
Wednesday, September 20, 2023, Meeting Minutes**

The meeting was convened by means of video conference.

**Name/Organization**

**Voting Members in Attendance**

Troy Fischer, Chair

Nicolas Carra, Raritan Borough Council  
Joe Brosnan, Raritan Borough

Andrew Fresco, Bridgewater Township

Thompson Mitchell, Somerville Council  
Rick St. Pierre, Somerville

Bernie Navatto, Planning Board Chair, Somerset County

Geoffrey Soriano, SC Park Commission  
Chris Edwards, SC Business Partnership  
Walter Lane, SC Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development  
**Non-voting County Support Staff**

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

**Non-Voting Guests**

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**

Supervising 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 May.17, 2023, meeting minutes, Somerville representative Rick St.Pierre moved, and Somerset County Planning Board Chair Bernie Navatto seconded the motion.

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

Ayes: 10  
Nays: 0  
Abstentions: 0

The motion to approve the minutes was approved.

**Treasurer’s Report for May/June and Jul/Aug 2023**

Supervising Planner Erika Phillips presented the May/June and Jul/Aug 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 May/June and Jul/Aug 2023 Treasurer’s Reports. Somerville Planning Director, Walter Lane 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: 10  
Nays: 0  
Abstentions: 0

The motion was approved.

**Information Items**

**Auditor’s Services**

Erika Phillips explained to the group that they needed to authorize the implementation of the second year of the contract between the Regional Center and the auditor Supplee, Clooney, and Company. She reiterated that this was the second year of the two-year contract and for the purposes of formality we needed to vote on the implementation of year two. Walter Lane also made note that we would issue another RFP for the next two year cycle. A motion was made by Rick St. Pierre and the motion was seconded by Nicholas Carra.

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

Ayes: 10

Nays: 0

Abstentions: 0

The motion was approved.

**Marketing Consultant /Website Update from MPA:**

Courtenay Mercer of Mercer Planning Associates presented to the group. She informed them that the current website has extensive customizations that are broken and require a great deal of maintenance to keep up. She has been in contact with the original designer and has been working to maintain functionality of the website. She noted that they needed to update the website, but had they done it and forced the update it was going to make the website no longer functional. She explained that they did what they could to get the website functioning with the minimal amount of money to make certain that it didn't break when Word Press did its update. She later tried to factor in how much it would cost to maintain the site and accommodate all the customizations. She asked the original designer how much it would cost to do that, and he quoted \$540 which she believed was an absurd amount for simple website maintenance. She went on to get some other quotes for a re-platforming of the website which is essentially making a brand-new site and eliminating all the back end customization things that were problematic. She suggested it would be best to choose a website builder (Divvy or Elementor) which will enable the user to update the back end, remove all the customizations but not change the look. There would be no changes to the URL and everything would remain the same visually. Things would just be updated on the backend and will no longer be broken. Courtenay noted that she researched two companies that could supply what was needed by the RCP. They were Darwin Studios and Summer's Creative. Based on Courtenay's analysis and expertise she noted that she'd recommend Darwin because she has worked with them and they were a bit less expensive than Summers Creative and they are responsive usually the same day. Other members chimed in and noted that responsiveness is important. Chris Zarelli uses Summers Creative with the SC Business Partnership and he noted that they are very creative but that responsiveness may not be on the same level as Darwin Studios. It was noted that Summers does more work outside of websites and as a result may not be as responsive as Darwin. After the discussion a motion was brought forward by Rick St. Pierre to approve Darwin Studios to do the overlay for the current website as directed by our marketing consultant Courtenay Mercer of MPA Consultants. The motion was seconded by Thompson Mitchell.

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

Ayes: 10

Nays: 0

Abstentions: 0

The motion was approved.

**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. She asked the representatives from the municipalities if they had any questions or concerns and inquired how the process has been for them. She noted that she'd received one resolution from Somerville outlining that they would be going through the process. Walter Lane mentioned that funding has been set aside in the budget for any township that needed support and assistance in this process if any town was having a resource issue. No issues were brought up by municipality representatives.

### **Municipal Updates:**

**Somerville: Rick St.Pierre:** We are full steam ahead with development, events and implementing policy. Councilmen Mitchell said he concurred with Mr. Pierre's statements.

**Bridgewater: Michael Pappas:** minimal updates as the election season is upon all the representatives. Some events got rained out.

**Raritan: Nick Carra:** Raritan closed on their new municipal building. Purchased the property on July 21<sup>st</sup>. They approved the architectural plans for the building at last night's council meeting. They will be retrofitting their current municipal building to be a complete police station and municipal court.

**SC Parks Commission: Geoff Soriano:** Golf's been popular, difficult to get tee times. Just completed summer concert series. Getting ready for 2024.

### **Public Comment Period:**

Erika Phillips noted the transportation study that was taking place in Somerset County and the meetings being held to garner the public's input. She informed meeting members that she would send the information to all of them via email so that they could inform their constituents.

Director Lane made note of the Planning Partners Forum which was to be held on Tuesday Sept. 26<sup>th</sup> in which Jeff Bueller from the Business Action Center was presenting to the stakeholders about the resources available to downtowns and local businesses.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned.

Meeting adjourned at 5:35