

**Regional Center Partnership of Somerset County
Thursday, November 7, 2024, Meeting Minutes**

The meeting was convened in person.

Name/Organization

Voting Members in Attendance

Filipe Pedroso, Bridgewater Township Council
Michael Pappas, Bridgewater Township
Joseph Brosnan, Raritan Borough
Nick Zamora, Raritan Borough
Brian Gallagher, Somerville Borough Mayor
Rich Reitman, Somerville Borough Council
Rick St. Pierre, Somerville Borough
Paul Drake, Somerset County Commissioners
Walter Lane, Somerset County Planning Division
Daniel Hayes, Somerset County Park Commission
Chris Edwards, Somerset County Business Partnership

Non-voting County Support Staff

Victoria Schulz, Somerset County Planning Division

The meeting commenced at 5:05 PM.

Business Items

Call to Order

Somerset County Planning Director Walter Lane called the meeting to order.

Attendance Roll Call

Principal Community Planner Victoria Schulz performed the roll call and noted for the record that there were 10 voting members present. Bridgewater Township Representative Michael Pappas joined the meeting after Roll Call, resulting in 11 voting members present.

Chair's Remarks

Director Walter Lane addressed that Chair Troy Fischer was absent from the meeting so Director Lane will not be making Chair's Remarks.

Moment of Silence for Bernie Navatto

Director Lane called for a moment of silence to honor Bernie Navatto's life and dedication to forming the Regional Center and planning in Somerset County.

Action Items

Adoption of September Meeting Minutes

Principal Community Planner Victoria Schulz presented the September 18, 2024 meeting minutes. Director Lane asked if there were any corrections, comments, or questions. There being none, Director Lane asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Somerville Business Owner Rick St. Pierre made a motion to approve the September 18, 2024 meeting minutes, Raritan Representative Joseph Brosnan seconded the motion.

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

Ayes: 8

Nays: 0

Abstentions: 3

The motion to approve the minutes was approved.

Adoption of Amended May Meeting Minutes

Director Walter Lane presented the amended May 15, 2024 meeting minutes. Principal Community Planner Victoria Schulz explained the single change to the minutes being an addition to the monetary cost of the auditing services. Director Lane asked if there were any questions. There being no questions, and Director Lane asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Somerville representative Rich Reitman made a motion to approve the minutes and Raritan representative Joseph Brosnan 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 September/October 2024

Principal Planner Victoria Schulz presented the September/October 2024 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's Report. There being no questions, comments, or corrections, Director Lane asked for a motion to approve the September/October 2024 Treasurer's Report. Somerville Representative Rick St. Pierre moved the motion, and Raritan Representative Joseph Brosnan seconded the motion.

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

Ayes: 11

Nays: 0

Abstentions: 0

The motion was approved.

Approval of 2025 Meeting Dates

Principal Community Planner Victoria Schulz presented 2025 Regional Center Meeting Date schedule. She gave an overview and explanation of the way the meeting dates are chosen, every other month starting from January on every third Wednesday, except for November when the meeting is on the first Thursday. She asked if there were any questions or comments concerning the 2025 Regional Center Meeting Dates. There being no questions, comments, or corrections, Director Lane asked for a motion to approve the 2025 Meeting Dates. Somerville Mayor, Brian Gallagher moved the motion, and Bridgewater Representative Michael Pappas seconded the motion.

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

Ayes: 11

Nays: 0

Abstentions: 0

The motion was approved.

Information Items

Draft Budget

Director Lane introduced the Draft Budget for 2025 to be taken action on at the January 15, 2025 meeting. He directed the Partnership to look at the draft and made a note that the only changes that should be different in January are the final 2024 end account amounts. Bridgewater Councilman Felipe Pedroso asked when the last RCP Strategic Plan update was, and he was informed it was in 2018. Mayor Gallagher mentioned that it is due time that RCP developed a new Strategic Plan, particularly post-pandemic. Representative Rick St. Pierre asked for a breakdown of previous budgets to compare to this draft. Director Lane explained the breakdown was implemented based on the goal of having \$50,000 challenge grants for each Municipality and then the remainder being divided for plan endorsement in each municipality. The group made it clear they would like to have a marketing meeting at the beginning of the new year.

State Development and Redevelopment Plan Update

Director Walter Lane updated the Board about the upcoming State Plan, the preliminary draft has not been released as of the November 7, 2024 meeting. The draft will first be released to the State Planning

Commission and then the Commission will approve release and begin the Cross Acceptance process. After 45 days of its release, the Commission must hold a public hearing in each of the 21 Counties and they must be completed by the end of 90 days since the release of the plans. After these meetings, county and municipality plans will be reviewed to verify that they are in accordance with the State Plan. Director Lane said he hopes to be a reference for the Regional Center with Cross Acceptance in his new role at the State.

May Strategic Planning Retreat Discussion

Planning Director Walter Lane asked the group if they would like Principal Planner Schulz and the County to begin working on an updated Strategic Plan for RCP. The group made it clear that Director Lane's input on an updated Strategic Plan is important to have, as he has been with the RCP for many years.

Municipal Updates

Somerville: Mayor Brian Gallagher discussed the recent water main break that affected the County and Somerville. Since this was the third main water break in the area, there were some safety measures that made turning on the water again much smoother. Mayor Gallagher said there will be a diversion line put in. Mayor Gallagher said the public response was alarming and thus Somerville held a full-scale emergency drill to better prepare for the future. He ended by thanking Director Lane and acknowledging his great impact on the County.

Bridgewater: Bridgewater Representative Michael Pappas discussed the opening of the Liquor Cave in the Somerville Circle, Biocon Biologics on Route 202/206, Summit Health is taking over the old Crate and Barrel in The Village, and J. Crew Factory opened where Lands' End was.

Raritan: Raritan Planner Joseph Brosnan thanked Director Lane for his work and that he will be missed. Planner Brosnan updated that the municipal building is moving forward. He also brought up the MS4 permit being changed and the regional efforts related to the future of the permit is somewhere that RCP can shine.

Raritan Business Owner Nick Zamora addressed the Partnership to discuss the recent watermain break on Route 206 in Somerville and its effects on his restaurant. Somerville Mayor Brian Gallagher acknowledged Mr. Zamora's concerns and pointed to the public response to the main water break as concerning. Mayor Gallagher believes that the community and government needs to be better prepared for this type of incident.

SC Parks Commission: Somerset County Park Commission Representative Daniel Hayes highlighted current efforts of event emergency management preparedness in terms of the upcoming 2026 World Cup and 2026 250th anniversary of the United States. Mr. Hayes also discussed the current Parks Commission deer management efforts and thanked the Somerset County Business Partnership for a recent cross-marketing strategy. The Parks Commission is currently holding a photo contest on social media. Finally, Mr. Hayes thanks Director Lane for his dedication to Somerset County and told Director Lane he will be greatly missed.

Somerset County Business Partnership: Somerset County Business Partnership President Chris Edwards

County Commissioners: Commissioner Paul Drake thanked Director Walter Lane for his work with the County and the Regional Center Partnership and acknowledged that Director Lane will be missed.

County Planning Division: Director Walter Lane thanked the group for their kind words regarding his resignation as Planning Director and move to the New Jersey State Office of Planning Advocacy as the Deputy Director.

Public Comment Period

No comments

Adjournment

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned.

Meeting adjourned at 6:00 pm