

Minutes
Somerset County Business Partnership
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
January 15, 2009
8:00AM
360 Grove St.,
Bridgewater

Attending:

Sheila Breeding	Peter Palmer
John Donnadio	Steve Reynolds
Troy Fischer	Gail Rosen
Rick Fontana	Frank Steinberg
Jim Laskey	
Donna LoStocco	
Dave Wolfskehl	

Guests:

Richard Canter
Rose Evans

Staff:

Hannah Blumenthal
Kimberly Charne
Takeena Deas
Bob Lantelme
John Maddocks
Tom Sharpe
Diana Sieberg
Peter Wright

Mr. Sharpe called the meeting to order at 8:02 A.M.

Mr. Steinberg RideWise

Ride sharing is representative of the highs and lows of gas prices and has therefore dropped at present.

NJDOT has reissued the bonus gas card program for ride sharing.

Employee service numbers are also down but staff is working on reinventing the job fairs and enhancing the value of employee visits. They are currently developing more substantive programs with Somerset Medical Center and sanofi-aventis.

Ms. Evans Finance

Revenues and expenses in 2008 were up. There was a net excess of over \$12,000 due to expenses coming in at \$119,000 less than budgeted.

Projected revenue is down for 2009 and expenses are projected lower. No salary increases are budgeted.

New and enhanced events are planned for 2009 that are expected to increase revenues.

Ms. Breeding Noted that total membership has dropped for 3 years in a row.

Mr. Sharpe He is seeking active engagement from the Board to increase both investment and membership.

The Small Business Resource Package will also attract new members.

The message is that now is really the time that business needs the resources of the Business Partnership.

Ms. LoStocco Now is the time for business to focus on what's important and to build coalitions. The BP must increase the cooperation and partnership with the Freeholders.

Mr. Laskey Noted that the budget accounted for a 2 month overlap for President/CEO transition salaries.

Ms. Evans Advance Realty proposed the sale of the Business Partnership building. The Finance Committee determined that purchase at this time is not in the best interest of the organization. The current lease extends through 2014 and there are assurances that the lease will be sold with the building. It was noted that Advance does not own the land.

Mr. Maddocks Suggested that now may be an appropriate time to re-value the land.

Ms. Evans \$268,000 remains in the Chamber of Commerce Building Fund.

Minutes of November 20, 2008 meeting were moved by Ms. Rosen, seconded by Mr. Steinberg and approved unanimously.

The Financial Report was moved by Ms. Rosen, seconded Mr. Reynolds and passed unanimously.

The 2009 Budget was moved by Mr. Fontana, seconded by Mr. Steinberg and passed unanimously.

Mr. Sharpe **President's Report**

Thanked Richard Canter for his contribution that led to the ease of budget development and the work plan for 2009. Also thanked the staff for their effort.

2008 accomplishments included:

- Team Building
- Green Building
- ICS Training
- Environmental, Health & Safety initiatives
- Community Health & Wellness including the Mayor's Wellness
 - Campaign
- Tourism initiatives
- Route 22 funding – noted that a meeting with the consultant is scheduled for Washington on Jan 30.
- Life Sciences progress
- Legislative issues

These are all opportunities to enhance the quality of life in Somerset County and it is the volunteer leadership of the organization that moves these initiatives forward.

Mr. Wright **Public Leadership**

The Program of Work for 2009 is linked directly to the approved budget and based on the Strategic Plan.

Working on the proposed Somerville/Raritan Public Works facility with the intention of incorporating green design concepts.

The Vo-Tech multi purpose field is also a major initiative.

Goal to increase public awareness of shared service initiatives. Goal set to implement 6 new shared service programs. Focus on large scale initiatives as the easy work has been accomplished. Looking at redundancy among municipalities and school districts.

Looking at the potential for a regional public health system and energy audits of commercial buildings. Planning to survey EH&S members to establish needed initiatives.

Mr. Laskey Sees a need to quantify savings resulting from the SCBP shared services as had been done in the past.

Ms. LoStocco Need to stress the importance of sharing in difficult economic times.

Mr. Wright He is working closely with the County Superintendent of Schools who is focused on sharing.

Mr. Palmer Noted that there is a need to document the value of green conversion of buildings.

Ms. Deas **Advocacy & Influence**

The upcoming year will focus on face to face meetings with legislative leadership. Staff is working on an initiative for a Policy Summit.

Other initiatives include:

- Establishing a direct link from membership to legislators
- Gaining input from members on issues
- Convening a Gubernatorial Candidate Forum prior to the election
- Distributing 2 member surveys
- Producing a 2009 Legislative Report

Ms. Breeding Noted that there will be a significant change in the Legislative Affairs approach for 2009.

Mr. Laskey Suggested focusing on special issues like assuring that any increase in gas tax is dedicated to infrastructure improvement.

Mr. Maddocks **Economic Development/Tourism**

Noted that the Program of Work is in the packet and deferred to Mr. Fontana

Mr. Fontana Noted that his economic development agenda as a Freeholder will focus on Renew – Reinvent – Revitalize.

He wants to enhance the county infrastructure with a significant contribution of Economic Stimulus money to fund projects that are now ready to move forward.

County is partnering with the SCBP to work on a study to identify the next hot industry so we are ready to recruit appropriate businesses.

The County budget will be less in 2009 than 2008, with no loss of services. The Freeholders are committed to implementing an economic development plan for the County.

Mr. Maddocks The Partnership is working with an international business consultant to identify the next hot business sector for a fee of \$92,000 that is being shared between the Partnership and the County. The Partnership has committed to implement the plan.

Ms. Charne **Tourism**
Goal is to serve visitors and attract new targeted audiences.

Working on the web site to fill existing gaps.

Developing new collateral materials.

Focusing on Motion Picture and Film Commission. Looking at preparation of a site location handbook.

Mr. Lantelme **Member Value & Engagement**
The 2009 plan focuses on increasing revenue through new offerings and new and reinvented events.

There is a plan in development to help troubled businesses through the Business Resource Group.

A meeting on strategic issues with Dan Puntillo resulted in the plan to isolate non-dues revenue streams and work to re-engage members. Retention is a key factor and will be accomplished through quality programming and business assistance.

Ms. Sieberg The Reaccreditation application has been completed and submitted. Response from the US Chamber is expected in March. Renewal is expected.

Next year marks the 90th Anniversary of the Chamber of Commerce.

To enhance member retention staff will focus on increased value through initiatives like a new Leads Group and more Affinity programs.

Ms. LoStocco Asked about the potential for group healthcare.

Mr. Lantelme The potential now exists but it appears that it may not be cost effective. Staff went to Trenton to investigate and is continuing to pursue possibilities.

Ms. Sieberg Staff is working on a prescription drug program for members that seems viable.

General discussion on the Route 22 initiative ensued, based essentially on the Bridgewater Mayor's comments opposing the long term improvements. The Partnership remains committed to both the short term and long term improvements and will address the Mayor's issues.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:20 A.M.