



**Minutes**  
**Somerset County Business Partnership**  
**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**May 21, 2009**  
**8:00AM**  
**Somerset County Business Partnership**  
**360 Grove St.**  
**Bridgewater**

**Members:** Tim Comerford Donna LoStocco Dick Williams  
Pat Cozza Freeholder Peter Palmer  
Freeholder Rick Fontana Stephen Reynolds  
Troy Fischer Gail Rosen  
Jim Laskey Paul Stahlin

**Guests:** Richard Canter, RAC3

**Staff:** Donna Allison Takeena Deas John Maddocks  
Hannah Blumenthal Mike Kerwin (*Incoming CEO*) Tom Sharpe  
Kimberly Charne Bob Lantelme Diana Sieberg  
Carol Soriano

*Ms. LoStocco called the meeting to order at 8:05 A.M.*



**Ms. LoStocco    New CEO Welcome**

Welcomed Mike Kerwin, formerly of SSP Architectural Group e, as SCBP's new President/CEO and asked if any of the Executive Committee had any comments or thoughts on what the committee would like to see going forward.

No comments were offered from the Committee.

**Mr. Kerwin**        Thanked the committee and the SCBP staff for their support and voiced his readiness to get started in his new role as CEO. Mr. Kerwin stated that he is looking forward to getting started moving the organization ahead.

**Ms. LoStocco**    Thanked Mr. Sharpe for allowing a leadership overlap in order to better facilitate Mr. Kerwin's transition in to the organization and his new role.

*The March 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes were moved and unanimously approved*

**Ms. Rosen        Finance Report**

Revenue and expenses as of April 30<sup>th</sup> show excess revenue of \$45,000.00, mostly due to timing. The membership investments are coming in sooner than last year, membership revenue is behind last year's, and expenses are lower. The Finance committee is closely monitoring this, but the organization looks good at this point in the year.

**Mr. Laskey**        Asked if the Shared Services grant was budgeted into the 2009 budget.

**Ms. Soriano**        The organization did not budget for the grant in 2009. The budget only reflects the \$50,000 received to date. If the Shared Services grant is approved this year it would be above and beyond what was budgeted for this year.

**Mr. Sharpe        Finance Committee Recommendations**

Mr. Sharpe reported on the recommendations of the Finance Committee referencing the possible purchase of a building by SCBP. Mr. Sharpe indicated that the Business Partnership pays in excess of \$15,000 per month in rent to Advance Realty Group, and the lease runs through 2014. Since it is not feasible for the organization to buy the current building because the land is not for sale and the building is more space than is needed by SCBP and RideWise, the Finance Committee discussed the possibility of buying a smaller building (and land) to save the organization significant money. It was suggested that a meeting with Peter Coccoziello be set up to discuss early termination of the lease with Advance Realty.



**Mr. Comerford** Indicated that in the current market, Advance may not allow the lease to be broken without having a buyer for the building in place.

**Mr. Laskey** Mentioned that he thought the projections of savings that were presented were optimistic and may need to be revised to be more conservative.

**Mr. Cozza** Noted that another expense that should be accounted for is the opportunity cost lost on the deposit monies that will be used to fund the building.

**Ms. LoStocco** Noted that the information presented to the Committee should be used as a starting point for further research and discussions before final decisions are made and discussions with Peter Coccoziello at Advance Realty are held.

**Ms. LoStocco** Asked if the Committee was all in agreement that this issue should be further researched and discussed.

*The Executive Committee agreed.*

**Mr. Sharpe** Will work with Mike Kerwin and the officers to form a committee to handle the issue and appoint a person to have the discussion with Peter Coccoziello.

**Mr. Comerford** A committee should be formed to research this issue more thoroughly before bringing it to Peter Coccoziello. Mr. Comerford volunteered to help on the committee.

**Mr. Kerwin** Recommended Rose Evans also be appointed to the committee to add her Real-estate knowledge.

*A Sub-committee will be formed to handle the Rent vs. Purchase issue and research possible real-estate options.*

**Conflict of Interest Policy**

**Mr. Sharpe** The Auditors had brought up a possible conflict of interest issue with two business owners that currently sit on the Board of Directors for SCBP. According to the Conflict of Interest Policy provided in the meeting material, those businesses owners should resign from the SCBP Board of Directors.



- Mr. Laskey** Indicated that the Conflict of Interest Policy enclosed in the meeting material was not the policy that was recently approved for the organization at the Executive Committee level in 2008. He recalled a policy being drawn up at the end of Jeff Horn's tenure and being discussed at length with the Executive Committee. Mr. Laskey said it may have fallen through the cracks in the transition process after Mr. Horn left the organization. Mr. Laskey explained that since the SCBP does business with more businesses than the just the two businesses noted by the auditors; such as PSE&G for power, Verizon for the phone services and many of the area hotels for events, it would be unrealistic to think that the BP could avoid doing business with these companies. The Conflict of Interest Policy was created to make sure that transactions were done on a transparent basis and to make sure that the competitive process could be seen and the individual involved would obviously have to excuse him/herself from any decision processes of the organization. A sub-committee was created consisting of the Chair, President and Treasurer to approve transactions and resolve any Conflict of Interest contractual issues. The updated policy required that the members of the Board of Directors confirm on paper that they were aware of the Conflict of Interest Policy and they would bring any Conflict of Interest contractual issues up to the sub-committee if they found one.
- Ms. LoStocco** The updated Conflict of Interest policy should be located and reviewed in order to make recommendations on what steps should be taken.
- Mr. Sharpe** Will work on locating the updated policy and contacting the original Conflict of Interest sub-committee for review and comment.

*Finance Report as presented was approved unanimously. \*A committee will be formed to further discuss the Rent vs. Purchase issue. \*Conflict of Interest Policy will be revisited once the document is located and reviewed.*

#### **Member Value and Engagement**

- Diana Sieberg** Ms. Sieberg reported that although the final report for the Outstanding Citizen/Quality of Life Awards dinner is not available at this time, the preliminary reports for the dinner showed a net earning of \$8,000.00 versus last year's \$750.00. The next major event being planned is the 2009 Golf Outing at the end of September. There is a major push at this time to encourage players to register with the Early-bird discount and the discount for foursomes. Although there are a few sponsorships that are open, a majority of the major sponsorships are covered at this time. Ms. Sieberg indicated that she has been researching membership numbers and annual dues amounts in local businesses and chambers as a follow-up to the discussion at the March Executive Meeting referencing engaging these groups. She reported that although SCBP can not compete with the amount of membership dues charged by these business groups and chambers (Ex: Bernards Township, 260 members, \$125.00/yr dues), she has found that SCBP small business members do meet non-SCBP members through these other groups and try to get them interested in membership with our



organization. Member Value and Engagement is working on more ideas to engage these business groups/chambers to bring more members into the SCBP.

**Mr. Lantelme** Reported that the Business Resource Program has been helping area businesses in financial trouble to obtain loans. The program is working with 13 different financial institutions to provide loans to these businesses. Since there are so many different banks working with SCBP, we are able to help more businesses connect with a bank that can grant them a loan.

Mr. Lantelme indicated that SBA has announced that it will start offering loans for \$35,000-\$100,000 instead of just Micro-loans of up to \$35,000 and the Small Business loans starting at \$100,000. The SBA has also increased the percentage of guarantee.

Although the Gap Loan program was specifically structured to fill the gap between the \$35,000-\$100,000 loans that the SBA was not offering, the BP does not see this as competition, but as additional help in getting local businesses the loans they need.

**Mr. Stahlin** The objective is to place more loans. The banks are not approving loans to make money at this point; it's more for good will. The announcement from SBA will really help to place more loans and in doing that, will help the efforts of the Business Resources program.

**Mr. Wright** Can the applications that were not originally approved be revisited for approval?

**Mr. Stahlin** Because the SBA has a 90% guarantee and they have eliminated the fees temporarily, they should be brought back to the table.

**Ms. LoStocco** If the BP provides more value to businesses, more revenue will follow, even if it is indirectly through membership or increased event attendance. If the SCBP focuses on its core purpose of supporting businesses in Somerset County the rest will come. Ms. LoStocco commended the Gap Loan program as being a prime example of that.

### **Public Leadership**

**Mr. Wright** Introduced Mr Kerwin to discuss his first meeting with the Municipal Managers Association.

**Mr. Kerwin** After receiving approval, Mr. Kerwin met with the Somerset County Municipal Managers Association (SCMMA) to discuss their concerns. The Municipal Managers have many concerns including communication and the need for a person specifically assigned to work with them. There is a funding issue and a strategic issue since Somerset County came forward with three shared services studies (Consolidating Municipal Courts, Construction Code Services, and Police).



Mr. Kerwin indicated that part of the solution may be to give a seat on the Executive Committee to the Municipal Managers, but it may be an incentive as part of an overall agreement to bring shared services up to the next level.

Mr. Kerwin noted that a meeting can be anticipated for SCBP, Somerset County, and the SCMMA to work ON a program for expanded shared services.

**Mr. Palmer** What area of shared services is the County not involved with that it should be involved with?

**Mr. Kerwin** In terms of support services, the SCBP receives grant finding and has Mr. Wright as the designated shared services staff. However, there are some arguments that shared services should be a County function versus a SCBP function.

#### **Environmental Health & Safety**

**Ms. Deas** Reported that she and Mr. Wright have been working with the EH&S committee on the “Business Continuity in Times of Disaster” workshop. Ms. Deas asked Mr. Kerwin for his comments on the event.

**Mr. Kerwin** In the approach of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of hurricane Floyd, Mr. Kerwin urged the SCBP to consider supporting the Business Continuity event as the kickoff event for that anniversary process. The organization can anticipate questions such as; ‘What is being done to remember Hurricane Floyd?’, ‘What has been done in the last 10 years in response to hurricane Floyd?’, and ‘What will be done in the future?’ If this event is seen as the kickoff, SCBP can point to what it is doing to help businesses be prepared in case of disaster, and SCBP can link what with the American Red Cross is doing with their “Emergency Response” program. Mr. Kerwin also noted that a committee has been formed for a remembrance of Hurricane Floyd, which the BP will support. Mr. Kerwin reported that the as part of the stimulus package, the funding for the Bound Brook flood control project was approved.

**Ms. Deas** Noted that the “Business Continuity in Times of Disaster” workshop will be held on June 30<sup>th</sup> and will be a half day program.



### **Advocacy & Influence**

- Ms. Deas** Ms. Deas reported that Chris Christie spoke at the May 1<sup>st</sup> legislative affairs meeting, which was well attended. The BP has been able to secure a commitment from Mr. Christie, (if elected as the Republican candidate on June 2<sup>nd</sup> ) for the gubernatorial event in September.
- Details for a Public Policy Forum have been finalized. The forum will be held on September 10<sup>th</sup> at the Bridgewater Marriott.
- Senator Joseph Vitale will attend at the Legislative Affairs meeting on July 10<sup>th</sup> at sanofi-avenis to speak about his universal health care plan.
- Ms. Deas reported that Caren Franzini, NJEDA CEO, will be attending the July 16<sup>th</sup> SCBP Board of Directors meeting.

### **Economic Development & Tourism Development**

#### **Tourism**

- Ms. Charne** Ms. Charne reported that the 2008 Cooperative Marketing Grant has been completed and approved and the final check will be received within the next few weeks. She also reported that the BP has received a letter stating that it was approved for the 2009 Cooperative Marketing grant for \$25,000, and was one of only two organizations to be approved for the full amount that was requested.
- Ms. Charne is currently working on applying for the 2010 Destination Marketing Organization Grant which is due on June 18<sup>th</sup> and she is also applying for the 2010 Cooperative Marketing grant as a backup in case approval for the Destination Marketing Organization grant is not approved.
- Mr. Palmer** Are all of these grants from the State?
- Ms. Charne** Yes. They all come from the NJ Office for Travel & Tourism.

### **Economic Development**

- Mr. Fontana** Reported that he and John Maddocks attended the NJSEED Annual Congressional Briefing Conference in Washington DC last month.
- He offered his congratulations to the Econ Dev staff for creating the Briefing Book for the Conference.
- Mr. Fontana indicated that he and Mr. Maddocks met with their Winning Strategies consultant, along with Congressmen Lance and Frelinghuysen and were able to get the request in for both the \$15 million for the Chimney Rock project and the \$10 million for Route 22.



### **Life Sciences**

**Mr. Comerford** Provided an update on the Life Sciences Center. In December, Economic Development gave a presentation to the Borough of Somerville about taking a leadership role in proposing to do a design on a portion of the Somerville Landfill sight. Last week Mr. Maddocks met with the Borough of Somerville and since that meeting, has received a letter stating that Somerville has agreed to allow the BP to take the lead on the design. Currently a memorandum of understanding is being drawn up.

Mr. Comerford thanked Mr. Maddocks for his work on this project.

### **Route 22**

**Mr. Fischer** Mr. Fischer reported that members of the Executive Committee recently met with Mayor Flannery and Township Administrator, Jim Naples to discuss issues Bridgewater has regarding approving funding for the Route 22 Corridor. He indicated that the Mayor discussed her reasons for not voting in favor of the project. The committee members tried to get clarification from the Mayor on what information she needed in order to be able support the project. Although there were differences of opinion on this issue between the committee and the Mayor, there was an open dialogue and a foundation was laid for future discussions. It is, however, still unclear as far as the Mayor's future support of the Route 22 project.

**Ms. LoStocco** Reported that she had had a conversation with Mayor Flannery separately and subsequent to the meeting with the other Executive Committee members. Ms. LoStocco indicated that she explained to the Mayor that the reason SCBP moved ahead in the manner that it did was because it believes strongly in this project. Ms. LoStocco acknowledged to Mayor Flannery that the BP could have done things differently regarding its communications with her on this issue. Ms. LoStocco's overall opinion on this issue is that the mayor is open to further conversation.

### **RideWise**

**Ms. Allison** Reported that overall carpool numbers from 2008-2009 are up with a 50% retention rate in long-term carpooling activity. RideWise has seen a surge of employer activities with 13 Employer onsite commuter fairs and 11 meetings with employers. Ms. Allison indicated that the "Bike to Work " program has been well covered by the Courier News, and it has evolved from a one-day event into a month-long program, based on the positive response from cyclists to the program.



**President's Report**

**Mr. Sharpe**

Reported that he and Mr. Kerwin have already started working together on scheduling meetings that are important for Mr. Kerwin to attend in order to maintain positive relationships that SCBP has throughout the state, and bring in investments and contributions throughout the year.

Mr. Sharpe indicated the he and Mr. Kerwin would be attending a breakfast in Hunterdon County featuring Congressman Leonard Lance, and a Lunch at the Somerset ELC featuring Chris Christie.

Reported that the BP has received the 1<sup>st</sup> of 2 installments from Somerset Medical Center for their contribution. SCBP has received \$1500 from Sun National Bank instead of the \$15,000 originally asked of them, but they have agreed to become involved in events and they are already involved with the Business Resources program. TD Bank could not approve the grant the BP asked for, but it has agreed to a \$5000 sponsorship for an upcoming event.

**Ms. Lostocco**

Noted that Affinity is hosting an event at its Flemington Branch on May 27<sup>th</sup> with Lenard Lance at 6:00pm.

**Mr. Palmer**

July 3<sup>rd</sup> there will be a picnic on the courthouse lawn.

*Meeting was adjourned at 9:05am.*