

**BOROUGH OF BERLIN
ECONOMIC RE-DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

April 13th, 2010

Flag Salute

Roll Call:

Councilman Nick Maccaroni, Mike Mrvica, Chairman Joe Adolf, James Knight, Councilman Jim Bilella, Rita Christenson, Dottie Trate

Approval of Minutes:

A motion to approve the March 9th, 2010 minutes made by Jim Bilella; seconded by Mike Mrvica. Motion carried by assenting voice of the committee.

Discussion:

Chairman Adolf reviewed his first day of training seminar in Trenton on Re-Development. There was discussion on zoning changes, Re-Development areas for re-development zones, and rehabilitations. The processes and the regulations have changed. With regards to rehabilitation, especially with the façade treatment, you can give the business owner or resident a 5 year tax reduction for the increased value of the property. The idea would then be to talk to local banks to attempt to provide low cost loans.

Rita and Joe worked on a sample brochure. Rita can send a PDF file, it will be a fold over on card stock 8 ½ x 11. Rita mentioned that she still needs more copy. She also started a facebook page, and advertisement for a fall fest as well. The brochure can also be kept as a link on the Borough web site for developers and real estate agents.

Chairman Adolf mentioned Chevy 73 is under negotiations for a restaurant. Rita asked about the bank, and Chairman Adolf mentioned he had not heard anything, however the sign is still up. He would also like to have the brochure wrapped up by the next meeting. Chairman Adolf asked the public for comments or suggestions.

Chairman Adolf discussed that the committee is concentrating on the downtown area, and creating a tax incentive only on increased value. A resolution would need to be passed regarding the rehabilitation, and businesses cannot be forced to do the improvements. The Borough can only offer certain incentives. Chairman Adolf asked for ideas from the

public of what they would like to see downtown. Some suggestions were restaurants, things that look nice, the local businesses are not projected properly and the façade treatments will help. A Bookstore, or a coffee shop, are other ideas. There was a public comment regarding the traffic speed in town. Dottie mentioned that she has reached out to Trader Joes, to determine what their requirements are and try to obtain interest in the Borough.

A question was brought up regarding the K-Mart site, and Councilman Maccaroni addressed it. The site has COAH requirements that must be met, and the commercial portion of the proposal must be developed first. Councilman Bilella explained there is an agreement with the developer, and the property is split. The front portion will remain commercial, and the back end will be residential. There are no plans yet. The lot at K-Mart is an eyesore, trailers are parked on Florence and the Pike and they need to be moved.

The owners of All in One's Balloons commented on the improvements that have been done on their property, and questioned the tax abatement. Rita mentioned the facebook page, and invite neighbors to join. There are currently people from out of state that are fans of our page. Chairman Adolf mentioned the public attendance at the meeting, and that if more people could come out to show an interest. A suggestion was to pool the people and business owners in town to create or start the revitalization process. There are too many absentee owners, which make it difficult. Councilman Bilella commented that the Borough can offer certain incentives; there are zoning and property maintenance ordinances that are in effect. We need an anchor business that brings in other businesses to drive up the value of the existing properties. Mike Mrvica added that if a group of people got together and purchased vacant properties, then fix them up. Properties that are privately owned, individuals cannot go onto the property and paint, cut grass, etc. That becomes the owner's responsibility. Some investors have State and County contracts. There are no incentives to change what they have. There needs to be an incentive to make the changes. The property next to the Diner, across from Kearns is state leased, and there is no incentive to make any changes. Chairman Adolf mentioned that there are several changes with regards to eminent domain.

Action points for the next meeting:

- Brochure finalization
- Spread the word
- 10 investors
- facebook, become a fan
- Retention survey
- Bring a neighbor

Adjournment:

A motion to adjourn made by James Knight; seconded by Councilman Nick Maccaroni.
Motion carried by assenting voice of the committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Simone

CC: Charleen Santora, RMC, Business Administer