

Berlin Economic Development Commission – Special Meeting Minutes
Monday, October 16, 2023
240 Kensington Road – Room 120 at 6:00 p.m.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Edward Egazarian, Vice Chairman
Vince Fortunato
Christopher Coppola

Peter Campanelli, Treasurer
Keith Bostrom
Bob Sisti

MEMBERS NOT IN ATTENDANCE:

David Cyr, Chairman

STAFF:

Chris Edge, Economic Development Director

1. Call to Order

Vice Chairman Egazarian called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. Approval of Minutes of the September 11, 2023 Meeting

Commissioner Bostrom made a motion to approve the minutes, which was seconded by Commissioner Sisti and the motion passed unanimously.

3. Public Comments – NONE

4. Tax Abatement - NONE

5. Discussion on new bus line

- Director Edge discussed his efforts with the CT Department of Transportation as well as CT Transit over the last 2+ years to move a bus line that now travels from downtown New Britain to the very empty Meriden Mall. Through this time, with the assistance of CT Rides, they have been working to educate of the importance of not just sending the bus where the people are, but to bring people to the careers. The main reasoning for working hard to move the bus is that the southernmost stop on the Berlin Turnpike is at the movie theatre. No bus goes south of Route 9 on the Turnpike, which cuts off a lot of amazing career opportunities.
- As of about January 1st, 2024, the bus route will be moved, travelling down Farmington Avenue and to the southern portion of the Berlin Turnpike into Meriden. This will bring 2 home health care agencies, 2 heavy equipment dealers, Peterbilt, and the entire New Park Drive (Spruce Brook Park) now being accessible to those who do not have their own transportation.
- This is a HUGE win as it will help bring new talent to firms whose growth stagnated as they have no people to grow. Efforts will be made to visit the businesses along the line, as well as work with professionals like Mr. Edge in Meriden and New Britain to spread the word including potentially career fairs in each community.

6. Ribbon Cutting/Milestone Awards

Director Edge said that American Embroidery was given a Milestone Award for 20 years in business and that a number more are in line to happen this year. In addition, there are a handful of ribbon cuttings as well for new and growing businesses in town.

7. Marketing/Outreach Efforts

- Manufacturing Breakfast – Panel Discussion
 - ❖ Director Edge explained that the Manufacturing Breakfast is scheduled for November 15th at 745 am and will include a panel discussion with overviews on 3 programs as the

state level as well as one Berlin business – EDRO who will speak about their experience with these programs.

- Boost Program
 - ❖ Director Edge explained that this is a State-funded small business loan program is coming to Berlin and that he and his marketing team would be working with Studio 10, a small business that took advantage of the Boost Program.
- New bus route (Career Corridor)
 - ❖ Events will be held in the next few months in Berlin, Meriden and New Britain to let employers as well as residents know about the career opportunities along the line.
- Promotion Events
 - ❖ In January/February an Eat Local/Win Local type of effort to help promote using service firms that call Berlin home;
 - ❖ In June/July, a similar effort will be launched to help retailers in town.

8. Commissioner Comments/Actions

- POCD Implementation Committee
 - Commissioner Egazarian agreed to serve as the Economic Development Commission on the POCD Committee. He had a few thoughts he wanted to share from the POCD, but as we began to discuss it, the members asked to have some time to look it over and discuss at the next meeting in November. That was decided as the best next step.
- Turnpike Discussion
 - Director Edge showed the Commissioners the email from Public Works Director Mike Ahern and that he has been reaching out to DOT as needed and has had his team also take care of some problem areas. The commission members were happy that he is keeping an eye on it.
- Kensington Garden Center
 - It was asked what was going on at the former garden center on the Chamberlain Highway. The tax lien was redeemed by the owner, who continues to own it. He is working with Walpole Outdoors, who is looking to move to the property. The owner has not yet gotten Planning & Zoning approval, but did speak to them about the potential of opening it up to additional uses. The property (due to a lawsuit) had a very limited list of things that could be sold there, and that list would need to be looked at before a new use can be approved. More details as they are available.

9. Adjournment

- Commissioner Fortunato moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Coppola. The motion passed unanimously. The time was 7:52 pm

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