



# PRINCETON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Monthly Meeting Minutes

August 26, 2020

Zoom Meeting \* Princeton, NJ 08540

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## **Board Members – Present**

Mayor Liz Lempert  
Councilwoman Michelle Pirone  
Lambros  
Councilwoman Leticia Fraga  
Jeffrey Grosser, Assistant  
Administrator  
Michael LaPlace, Planner

Bernie Miller  
Lori Rabon  
Jack Morrison  
Andrew Siegel  
Kathy Klockenbrink  
Jennifer Carson  
Deanna Stockton  
Dina Shaw

## **Board Members – Absent**

Dorothea Von Moltke  
Jacqueline Fay  
Kristin Appelget  
Dean Smith  
  
Minutes submitted by:  
Julie Moy, Board Secretary

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Chair Councilwoman Lambros called the meeting to order at 12 pm. *“This is to affirm that the regularly scheduled meeting of the Princeton Board of Health have been duly advertised and are being conducted in compliance with all provision of the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act.”*

Roll Call was completed.

## **Approval of Minutes**

*Regular Meeting Minutes dated July 24, 2020*

The motion to approve the regular meeting minutes dated July 24, 2020 was first moved by Mr. Miller seconded by Ms. Rabon, all in favor by voice vote.

## **Princeton Mercer Regional Chamber Foundation**

Councilwoman Lambros reported 72 applications were approved and \$5,000 grant will be distributed within 2 weeks. We were able to raise enough funds to meet the University’s challenge bringing the grant total to \$350,000. Councilwoman Lambros expressed her appreciation for the hard work of the grant review committee.

## **Washington Road Bridge**

Mayor Lempert and Ms. Stockton attended a virtual meeting with representatives from NJDOT, Mercer County, Princeton University and West Winsor. NJDOT is working on a concept development study for replacement of the bridge over the DNR Canal on Washington Road. The state has ownership of the bridges. The County mentioned they are looking to start planning for the replacement of the Washington Road Bridge in 2021. We are encouraging the entities to work together to schedule the work. NJDOT can work to replace bridge while maintaining traffic. County advised their bridge replacement will require a full closure and detour. This is all in the beginning stages. County does not have the funding source to begin the planning study to gather construction document. This information is to advise the Committee that this forthcoming. This is being coordinated with Princeton University’s Lakeside campus improvement in West Windsor. Ms. Stockton provided limited details regarding the development in the area. NJDOT is in the concept development stage which then will move into the preliminary design phase. Mercer County has identified it as a project in their budget; however funds will not be available until 2021 before they can begin planning stages. Mayor Lempert commented that Alexander Road Bridge improvement planning took a few years. Councilwoman Lambros commented this issue did come before the Council meeting and we should watch for status.

## **Public Works**

Mayor Lempert provided an update on Public Works issues. Trash cans have been placed throughout town; there is a revised pick up schedule; increased pick up on weekends. Staff was asked to keep eye on the trash cans; we need participation from the business communities to maintain the trash cans. Additional bags will be left inside

cans so if merchant sees overflow, Mayor Lempert asked merchants to replace bag and leave next to the trash can for pick up; this will reduce overflowing problems.

Mayor Lempert stated that it has been reported that the restaurant with outdoor dining are bussing the tables into the public trash can. The Municipality does not have the capacity to deal the additional trash. We are finding more trash with take-out containers and, eating out, etc. She asks the businesses to cooperate so the trash does not get out of control.

Mayor Lempert asks that business with take out service, consider putting a trash can outside their business to collect consumers' trash. This could be replacement for indoor trash containers.

Mayor Lempert brought up issues to consider for outdoor winter dining; do we need outdoor dining; should the barriers be removed? Street plowing would be easier to handle with infrastructures removed. If no outdoor dining, they should be removed to better maintain streets and parking and would allow for curbside pick-up. The Mayor asked Mr. Morrison what is Witherspoon Grill's plans for winter diners; Mr. Morrison's team is still discussing options and their limitations. There were further discussions on how to open in winter and how to utilize heaters while meeting fire codes. He will gather other businesses to meet and try to create a plan; Mr. Morrison will report at next meeting. Mayor Lempert suggested they create a subcommittee to discuss, plan and include Public Works. Ms. Rabon commented that use of heaters will be depending on Fire Marshal Joseph Novak's decision on using heaters under commercial tent, which has a lot of restrictions. Ms. Shaw expressed her concerns with the potential re-opening; she asked if there a way to purchase more semi-permanent coverings. Councilwoman Lambros would like to further discuss in a separate meeting, various issues related to maintaining restaurant.

Mayor Lempert stated since street parking has been taken away to accommodate outdoor dining, they are planning offer additional 50 parking permits for the Spring Street parking garage through the end of the year and re-evaluate. Councilwoman Fraga stated that the Permit Parking Task Force will re-convene to discuss pilot program permit parking which would include permits for residents, overnight parking and limited employee permits. She stated areas to be discussed by the task force.

Ms. Stockton commented that there will be a Witherspoon Street meeting to discuss re-construction project. She will bring up the heater situation during the colder months and potentially cooling misters for the warmer months if we have more permanent structures. Ms. Shaw stated we need semi/permanent solutions for heat and cool and rest rooms.

There was discussion on the Witherspoon Street survey; Ms. Shaw reported that the survey has been distributed and has received some feedback. Ms. Shaw is still reviewing the responses.

Mr. Siegel asked who would receive the additional 50 parking permits. Per Mayor Lempert stated there is a waiting list for the parking permits and will be distributed to those first. Mr. Siegel expressed his concerns for a loss of more parking in the downtown area and how it would affect the businesses. There was further discussion on the parking situation. Garages are only approximately 45% used at this time. Spaces will available on a first come, first serve basis; spaces will not be reserved for permit holders. Mayor Lempert stated that there was also discussion on permit trial period for 2 months. Mayor Lempert explained the reasoning for the permits. Councilwoman Lambros suggested this discussion be postponed. Mimi Omiecinski stated that she is a resident and business owner in downtown Princeton; she sees there are a number of employees are parking at meters. If the permits can help move the employees into the garage, it will free up street parking for visitors. Mayor Lempert again suggested a two month trial for the parking permits to see how it works for the business.

### **Public Comment/Guest Speaker**

*Stuart Koperweis, Economic Development Strategists*

Mr. Koperweis is part of a state wide group, Downtown New Jersey. The concerns brought up in this meeting are same across NJ; re-opening retail, restaurants and parking. Mr. Koperweis explained the similarities of concerns throughout the state. He provided his background and experiences.

Mr. Koperweis shared his power point presentation. Improvement District: public/private partnerships; sharing meeting programs of malls; sharing services together – business and property owners working together, “mall without walls”. Mr. Koperweis provided a list of items to create committees to work within the business communities. Presentation was followed up with Q&A.

Mr. LaPlace spoke about his past role as Director for Special Improvement District in Westfield, NJ; he described how Westfield worked together; how funding was raised. Mr. Morrison described his business issues affected by COVID; a number of his tenants are having difficulty paying rent. Mr. Morrison commented on how we should work towards helping businesses in the community. He stated the businesses are paying their taxes on time. Ms. Shaw brought discussion on how the Princeton Merchants Association (PMA) can work with the Municipality, work together to hire someone to assist with raising funds and coordinate community needs. There was discussion on if we can have an improvement district in place. Mr. Koperweis commented that we have the mechanisms already in place to begin. He explained steps needed to create an Improvement District (or other type of entity). Councilwoman Lambros commented that 20% of the businesses are part of the PMA; 80% are not. Funds that would be collected from 100% of the businesses could be in lieu of PMA membership payment and not an additional tax. There is a fairness issues with only 20% of the businesses (the PMA members) supporting the other 80% of non-paying businesses. Councilwoman Lambros stated that we can move forward but would like to hear what the ED Committee would like to do. Ms. Klockenbrink opined that EDC along with the PMA needs to define what their goals are and what they would like from the Municipality as far as support; these goals should be developed with a time period to better determine how much would be needed. (Delete sentence ...confusing) Mr. Koperweis explained how the feasibility study would help to reach their goals. He explained what his fees would be for phases 1 and 2, possibly leading to an Improvement District or other form in 12 – 16 months. He commented that EDC has discussed marketing programs to increase visitors to Princeton. Mr. Siegel opined goals of the merchants should align with the Council.

Mr. Morrison, PMA President, thanked Ms. Klockenbrink for joining PMA. He went on to explain the advertising that has been put in place to market Princeton merchants. There was continued discussion on how Princeton needs to try to move forward; whether the needs assessment is needed. Short term issues need to be addressed along with a long term goal. Mr. Koperweis continued taking questions and provided examples and suggestions.

Mayor Lempert commented that the governance is coming through the businesses that are paying into this. The establishment has to come before the Council for a vote; funds are collected through the Municipality. Princeton businesses basically operates on own and would not be interested in additional assessment. Mr. Koperweis further explained how the Improvement District would work. Mimi Omiecinski expressed her concerns for activities occurring in downtown Princeton. Councilwoman Lambros summed; there will need further discussion on getting businesses back and address issues downtown Princeton is facing.

### **Adjournment**

Councilwoman Lambros adjourned the meeting at 1:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

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*Julie Moy*  
Recording Secretary