

Borough of Doylestown Economic Development Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: June 11, 2020

Scheduled Time: 5:00PM

Location: Via Zoom

Present

Rick Brown, Brian Guerriero, Patricia Keppler, Rick Lyons, Heather Mahaley, Otto Mills, Lois Opdyke, John West, Beth Ann Rinkus, Jason Wood, Kris Boger, Borough Manager John Davis, Borough Council President Jack O'Brien, and Mayor Ron Strouse.

There were **NO Minutes** from the February 11, 2020 meeting.

New/Old Business -

Otto Mills asked Kris Boger to provide perspective/observation:

Discover Doylestown had a public zoom meeting with locals and restaurant owners - every other week to get feedback & ideas on the reopening process. This process led us to the creation of the Operation Doylestown Initiative, to help businesses brainstorm ideas on the reopening phase and encourage use of outdoor spaces. On Saturday, June 13, 2020, Discover Doylestown will hold its first outdoor market from 5-8pm with a total of eleven businesses participated. Discover Doylestown is looking to ensure they follow CDC guidelines, social distancing, masks, etc. Next, Discover Doylestown has scheduled two additional outdoor markets to experiment with timing of the day since the businesses were not in consensus about what time of day would work best. The other outdoor markets are scheduled for a Thursday evening and another on a Sunday afternoon. Businesses have been appreciative & Discover Doylestown has initiated a Facebook Page, Instagram Account, and created Facebook profile pictures and banners to help offset the costs of advertising for businesses that are struggling.

Kris elaborated that vendors can visit their website to submit an application to become a vendor at any of their upcoming outdoor markets. Discover Doylestown wanted to observe how the first outdoor market goes and they can look at other locations to host the market, possibly another parking lot and/or side street in town.

John Davis briefed the Borough on the distribution of common flyers to businesses about social distancing; wearing masks so businesses and patrons alike know what is expected of them.

A question was asked about how people will react to the common message regarding "safe shopping" and Kris indicated that 90% of the people who took the survey said they would not come to town unless they felt it was safe i.e. social distancing and masks.

Mayor Strouse commented on the Survey Monkey that went out and they received almost the same response.

Heather Mahaley asked about the status of the farmers market. John responded that the market there was scaled back, upon first opening with perimeters, security, and are slowly loosening these restrictions. Heather offered to help Kris in any way she can. Kris commented that they know Doylestown Borough is visited by 700-900 people on any given Saturday.

John commented that the market is in a trial run and they are looking to see what works and what does not - basically an experiment. Doylestown Borough has offered to all businesses allowing use of public spaces, alleys, driveways, neighbors, in order to maximize the space in a safe way. John stated he has had several meetings with merchants and asking them to come up with a plan. We are considering closures of blocks for "open air" restaurants and working on layout for individual businesses. Mayor Strouse commented that we keep in mind the balance and does not see it get out of control and overcrowded. The Mayor will be taking a trip to West Chester to see how they are handling their opening of their business district.

Brian Guerreri asked about closures for State Street. John stated they are trying to understand the needs of the retailers and ensure they are met. Evenings seem to work for everyone. This will need to be a consensus of the businesses. Mayor Strouse stated restaurants face a very particular challenge. The Mayor commented on the sustainability model even when moving to the green phase.

Rick Lyons commented that PPE saved his tenants and they have been able to pay their rent on time. Rick was asked by Otto for his insight. He found that people are optimistic. For example the Bakery at the Marketplace will stick with their schedule they have now (taking orders, pick up) rather than going back to their old schedule. Rick commented on how great the Borough has been while handling Covid-19. Rick stated that Starbucks had sent him a letter asking if they could do renovations and Starbucks took it upon themselves to renovate the entire shop so Rick commented they are not closing or moving anywhere (after the announcement was made nationwide that Starbucks would be closing 400 stores). John commented that Hickory Kitchen closed early during the Covid-19 Crisis and the Zen Den has since closed however they were looking to close prior to Covid-19. Key elements of the town, such as the Cultural Districts and retail are in a tough spot.

Heather asked if the Borough was looking at extending the width of the sidewalks for businesses on State Street to give more room and if that is a possibility. John said this is something that have been discussing to look at ways they can accommodate and trying it case by case. Tables can be placed on the sidewalk and parking areas. Space is the biggest challenge.

Heather asked the Board if anyone knew the status of the Bucks County Back to Work Small Business Grants and stated she was happy to see the Borough promoted this heavily. Mayor Strouse commented that the first round was awarded and they are looking to award the second round. Grants are available up to \$25,000. There were 1500 applications made this first round.

Otto asked Beth Ann Rinkus what things look like for the Cultural District. She said they are hoping to go into the green phase very shortly. They are aiming for open date of July 20th. They are getting everything in place at the Museum and looking to revamp the tours i.e. shorten the number of patrons allowed for tours and looking at the entrances and exits.

Loie and Mayor Strouse spoke about the Stewardship Award and that it has since been placed on the back burner at least until they can discuss it at the next meeting. The Mayor commented that the award promotion is typically placed in the Borough Bulletin and it has since been cancelled and was never truly announced. At the next Board meeting they can focus on the Award, solicit nominations and create a deadline. Lois asked John Davis if he foresees the Borough Bulletin coming back any time soon. John said we can use Social Media for now.

John commented that the Operation Doylestown Initiative will eventually need volunteers so that merchants can solely focus on selling their products and not having to worry about trash or if someone is wearing a mask. Kris commented there is a public volunteer link on their website via

<https://doylestownborough.net/pages/operation-doylestown/volunteers> to sign up and they must be over 18 years of age. Anyone who would be willing to promote this would be extremely helpful.

Otto asked Kris what is the percentage of resident membership? Kris replied about 60% is residents; Otto asked if it was a possibility to reach out to the members and Kris said they had discussed this but thought it would be at an insensitive time to do so.

John West asked about the business meeting last night. Missing sectors are Hairdressers. Do they have anything to offer them? John said he has had interactions with the area hairdressers and had a call with them. It was his understanding that the salon owners had a difficult time organizing a group to further discuss in order to develop a plan. They still are under severe limitations under the state level.

John West asked if they thought about utilizing the front of the museum. John said restaurants are not interested due to not being close to their kitchens and the servers would have issues bringing tables to the location, etc.

July meeting will be scheduled for July 9, 2020 at 5pm

Adjourned: 6:00PM