

Doylestown Borough Economic Development Advisory Board

Business Focus Group Discussion

Monday, June 10, 2019

The Economic Development Advisory Board hosted a Business Focus Group Discussion on the above date at 10:00 am in Council Chambers in Doylestown Borough Hall. The following Board members were present: Chairperson, Otto Mills, Brian Guerriero and John West. Also in attendance were Borough Manager John Davis, Mayor Ron Strouse, and Larry Browne, Discover Doylestown liaison.

Business Guests were: Chris Kuttler, Maryanne's Bakery/Beer Store, Brandt Talomic, Quinoa Restaurant, Heather and Jack Dugan, Escape Room, Jon Mercer, Stacks, Reid Bradley and Kanishk Nazameth, Central Bucks West students.

1. **Approval of Minutes-** The May 9, 2019 minutes were not approved due to lack of a quorum.

2. **Welcome – Mayor Ron Strouse**

Mayor Strouse provided an explanation of the role of the Economic Development Advisory Board and our understanding of the current business climate in Doylestown. Our goal is to have open communications with both existing and new business in town. We are planning to have another business focus group meeting in the fall.

3. **Business Owner's Discussion-** Brian Guerriero

What changes or additions would businesses like to see?

Heather and Jack Dugan from the Escape Room commented that although their business is better in the winter months we should try to promote Doylestown as a summer destination. Brandt Talomic from Quinoa is expecting more foot traffic during the summer months. Currently, half of their business is through reservations and the rest is from brand recognition from their previous location.

Commercial and Residential Vacancies

Jack Dugan commented on the large number of office vacancies. He feels that owners are not exploring other options for these buildings. Jon Mercer from Stacks said that his business is able to facilitate many options such as a speed dating meeting and other catered events. Jon also pointed out that more affordable residential properties are needed in the borough. Mayor Strouse asked if more people worked from home would that affect the Stacks business and Jon said even those who work from home still want a place to socialize.

Zoning Procedures

When asked about the ease of starting a business in Doylestown Borough, Jack Dugan responded by saying while the process itself is not necessarily difficult; the zoning portion can be very intimidating. Once explained, things went smoothly. The zoning process in place at this time is viewed as fair and reasonable; however the borough may want to look into rezoning some areas. Chris Kuttler pointed out that if landlords were better educated in permit and zoning procedures it would be helpful to their clients. Chestnut Hill has a Main Street Manager that acts as the liaison between the property owner and tenant. Doylestown Borough needs to have better communication with business owners rather than a better business community.

Town Events

Brian posed the question, "Do activities in town promote more business?" The consensus was not necessarily. Since South Main Street can be a very lonely place for businesses, we should look for ways to spread events out to this area. A Summer Campaign was suggested. One thought was to close off Main Street to traffic for one or two weeks in the summer. Larry Browne commented that many businesses do not like any disruption to parking so this type of event may be a problem.

Future Discussion Topics/Suggestions

Visit similar municipalities that have made progress with the business community.

Invite the Chestnut Hill Main Street Manager to the next Focus Group Discussion.

Invite both restaurant owners and business owners for a roundtable discussion.

Keep the lines of communication open with business and Doylestown Borough personnel.

4. Adjournment:

The Business Focus Discussion was adjourned at 11:00 am. A follow up meeting will be planned and information sent out.

Submitted by Janet Hedrick