

**MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
CUMBERLAND COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD**

**April 12, 2022
12:30 am**

The meeting of the Cumberland County Economic Development Board was held on Tuesday, April 12, 2021 at the Cumberland County Improvement Authority offices, 745 Lebanon Rd., Millville, NJ. Chairperson Bert Lopez called the meeting to order and explained the meeting was being conducted in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act. Notice of the meeting was published in the local newspapers and posted as required

Members present:	Bert Lopez	Staff:	Kim Ayres
	Wade Sjogren		Yazmin Moreno
	Tony Stanzione		
	Jerry Velazquez	County Staff:	Matthew Pisarski
	Christy DiLeonardo		Jody Hirata
	Jim Piccone		
	John Knoop II		
	Comm Musso		
	Cosmo Giovannizi	Mayor Kelly	
	Wade Sjogren	Sandy Forosisky	
	Paul Ritter		

Guests/Public Members:	Chris Cavaliero, ACE	Jon Mangle
	Howard Henderson	Nico Barbieri
	Carol Maier	Andrew Weirback
	Sandy Acevedo	
	Nancy Ridgeway	

Information Packet: Kim Ayres reviewed the information contained in the meeting packet. Included were information sheets on US Census 2020, Approved building square footage during 2022 to date, and slides explaining the \$3.6 million in shared services between The Authority and various municipalities in the county. It was reiterated that the Authority utilizes zero tax dollars for the services it provides. In terms of approved building sites, in 2021 there was over 900,000 sf of approvals, while in 2022 to date, 100,000 sf.

Additional materials included flyers on a NJEDA webinar to be held April 19th, save the date for the Bankers and Realtors Roundtable on June 3rd (back after a two-year absence), an article from NJBIZ on the business climate of NJ compared to surrounding states, white paper on Plant-based foods, and two charts on business training provided by the Workforce Division.

Christy DiLeonardo further explained that one table represented Training Contracts for individuals already employed and needing to obtain a national certification or some form of

upskilling to maintain their employment. Over \$70,000 was expended utilizing RCSJ and Rutgers Food Innovation Center to provide various forms of training and certifications. This funding was available as a result of discretionary funding totaling \$6 million provided by Atlantic City Electric. The Second chart represented On the Job Training Dollars provided to underemployed or those collecting unemployment. This program pays for half the cost of wages during the training process.

Presentation by Rovagnati, Vineland

Mr. Nico Barbieri, HR Director and Mr. Andrew Weirback, Operations Manager made a presentation on a newly opened food industry plant in Vineland, Rovagnati. This company is originally from northern Italy and has been a family business for over 50 years. It is very well known in Italy for their charcuterie products and prosciutto- in fact they are recognized as the number one prosciutto company in Italy. The company has 6 facilities in northern Italy and the plant in Vineland is its first US location. Throughout the company there are over 1,000 employees and \$310 million in annual revenues.

Their new US plant is located at 2290 W. Oak Rd. in Vineland on 26 acres. They have also optioned an additional 7 acres for future expansion. The new plant is 65,000sf with two clean processing rooms and full USDA certification. They are also working toward BRC certification which is the global standard for food safety. There are currently 17 employees in the new plant with plans to reach 50 by 2023. The investment to date totals **\$30 million**.

The products produced are pre-cured, pre-sliced meats such as salami, mortadella, and prosciutto. These products are now available in many retail outlets including local supermarkets such as Shop Rite, Acme, and Wegmans.

The next phase of development will bring the total square footage of the site up to 457,000 sf. It is hoped this expansion can begin in 2026. The company is currently hiring and looking for customer service reps, marketing, food certified laborers and mechanics.

Chairman Lopez offered the help and assistance of the Economic Development Board to Rovagnati and thanked them for their presentation.

Several members asked questions and expressed support for this new business

Presentation by Mamacita Foods

Mr. Jon Mangle reviewed the history of Mamacita Foods, also located in Vineland. This company moved to Vineland from Camden in 1984. It is a family-owned business that originally produced a cooking base for Spanish foods that was sold by Goya Foods. In the early 2000's the company switched to a new dough product. Today they utilize over a million pounds of flour per month, and over 100,000 lbs of shortening. They currently have 42 employees.

Mr. Mangle stressed the importance of the UEZ and the Empowerment Zone in locating in Cumberland County. The benefits provided by these two programs made the difference in

selecting a future location. In addition to these programs, the land in the county was affordable and utilities available. Mr. Mangle emphasized these programs have been critical in the company's success.

They provide continuous training for their workers and offer good working conditions, a 401K plan, health benefits and good pay. It has been tough to find enough workers, especially after Covid. This is one of their greatest challenges.

The Rutgers Food Lab, with their food safety certifications, and RCSJ as well as the CCTEC have been instrumental in training employees. The plant is highly automated and one of the best where to find the certified industry techs to fix and repair the equipment. Knowledge PLC's is required. It was mentioned by Christy DiLeonardo that the college is reinstating a program in the fall for Industrial Tech positions

Mr. Mangle concluded by stating that they are considering expanding the plant to double its existing size.

The Chair thanked Mr. Mangle for his presentation and for his company's investment in Cumberland County.

Commissioner Musso on Small Business Assistance:

County Commissioner Carol Musso gave a report on the Small Business Assistance Grants provided by the county with a portion of the CARES funding from US Dept. of HUD. This grant program was administered by The Authority on behalf of the county. To date 63 businesses have been assisted with \$10,000 grants, mostly for working capital. A total of \$620,000 has been distributed and the program is just about complete. Many receiving the assistance have commented on how helpful the funding was in maintaining their business and employees. In most cases the county was able to get the funds to applicants within two weeks.

The next program that will be implemented with Covid funding will be a landlord assistance program, providing grants to recoup uncollected rent during the Covid shutdown. Qualified landlords will be able to apply for \$5,000 per unit for up to four units. It is hoped this program can begin in the coming weeks as a number of landlords are waiting.

Sandy Forosisky on Urban Enterprise Zone Update

Sandy Forosisky, Economic Development Director for the City of Vineland gave a short update on the new UEZ program. As of August 2021, the legislature reauthorized this program, extending it for 10 more years. Some of the benefits have been capped in an effort to gear the program toward smaller businesses (\$100,000 cap in eligible improvements).

In 2022, the 37 zones divided approximately \$40 million in state funding, providing just over \$1million to each zone. In 2023 it is estimated between \$60-\$80 million will be distributed to the zones, increasing each zone's annual receipts.

A five-year UEZ plan is being considered so the zones will not have to go each year for project approvals. However, the state board has not met in two months, so no further news is forthcoming.

Jerry Velazquez, President/CEO The Authority Project Update

Jerry began by thanking the companies for their presentations and offering that those are the types of projects and improvements being generated by the private sector as investments in Cumberland County. These are not atypical but represent solid recovery and confidence in the county as a viable home for industry. There are various doubters and disinformation being distributed, but in reality, the county's economic development efforts are yielding solid results and an expanding economy. The role of The Authority is to be an advocate for our existing companies and recruit new companies to the county.

Jerry reviewed some of the current projects and developments being implemented by the Authority, including the Food Specialization Center. The Authority has been looking at the plant-based food industry segment as several such companies have expressed interest in space at the Center. Currently there are two tenants including a plant-based chicken nugget company. This company is experiencing strong growth and moving from wholesale only to retail sales, actually needing additional space. This is the reason the FSC was constructed - to try and provide production and freezer space for companies developing new products, including those utilizing the Rutgers Food Innovation Center. With many new products begin developed there, there has not been companies that once successful, such as Impossible Burger, have stayed in the county to set up their production.

There are several public projects underway:

- Rowan Medicine Building on the RCSJ – Cumberland campus; this will be a one-story building with doctors' offices, clinic, and research space expected to go to bid in about one month
- Millville Public Library – contract awarded and construction schedule being developed
- Solar Project on the Landfill parcel

The cities are reporting that their industrial parks are filled and there is little land left. There is strong interest in the western side of the county, particularly Upper Deerfield where a project is expected to be announced shortly.

Cannabis is a growing part of the economy across the county. The existing companies recently received approval for recreational distribution.

In summary, Jerry concluded the county is moving in a very positive direction

County Commissioner Reports: Carol Musso

Comm. Musso expressed gratitude for returning to in-person meetings so more information can be shared, networking facilitated, and the message about Cumberland growing and being a good place to locate your business can be passed on. She thanked the two companies for coming today

and providing information about their operations and investments in the county. It was very positive to hear their stories and to learn about the industrial parks filling with new companies. There is definitely positive events occurring in the county.

County Commissioner Carol Musso expressed appreciation for the presentations, all of which were very informative. She stressed the purpose of the Economic Development Division is to bring new businesses and people into the county. She thanked everyone present for their commitment.

Public Comments

Howard Henderson expressed support for the in-person meeting. He noted that the USDA has a new state director from southern NJ: Jane Asselta. This should be a wonderful asset and support to Cumberland County. Was formerly with Southern NJ Development Council.

There being no further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by,

Kim Ayres
Sr. Vice President Economic Development
The Authority