

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

**February 08, 2022
9:00 am**

The meeting of the Cumberland County Economic Development Board was held on Tuesday, February 8, 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.

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|------------------|--------------------|--------|---------------|
| Members present: | Bert Lopez | Staff: | Kim Ayres |
| | Wade Sjogren | | Yazmin Moreno |
| | Tony Stanzione | | |
| | Jerry Velazquez | | |
| | Christy DiLeonardo | | |
| | Jim Piccone | | |
| | Tony Stanzione | | |
| | Comm Musso | | |
| | Jane Jannerone | | |
| | Paul Ritter | | |

| | |
|---------|------------------------|
| Guests: | Sho Islam, BAC |
| | Chris Cavaliero, ACE |
| | Irene Crespo |
| | Howard Henderson |
| | Michelle Griscom, DRBA |
| | Steven Williams, DRBA |
| | Carol Maier |
| | Sandy Acevedo |
| | Nancy Ridgeway |

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the August 10, 2021, meeting was approved after a motion by C DiLeonardo and second by Tony Stanzione.

Presentation by Delaware River and Bay Authority, (DRBA)

Steven Williams, Michelle Griscom

DRBA is the operator of the Millville Executive Airport, through a long-term lease with the City of Millville. Mr. Williams stated that activity is picking up at the airport and that they are not looking for one major projects, but rather many incremental projects that will fill the airport, generate a lot of activity and new jobs. The DRBA is looking forward to talking with John Ruga

concerning his planned golf course and how the executive airport could fit into plans for members and guests who may be arriving to use the golf course. It is expected many will access the area by aircraft.

Michelle Griscom has been involved in development projects at the airport for many years she provided insight into the Jet East project in the hangars previously occupied by Boeing. Jet East chose the Millville Airport because they are a NJ company, and the hangar space was immediately available. They have placed jets in nearly every available hangar presently on the airport grounds, and so there are plans to construct some new hangars to accommodate increased demand. All hangars that are not being used for aviation uses are now having the uses relocated so an aviation use can ensue. Some hangars are even being pre-leased. The key to obtaining Jet East was the ability to immediately walk in and start to use the appropriate type of space. They have just hired an additional 20 people, bringing their total close to 100 jobs created. They do have expansion plans.

DRBA is anticipating constructing a 15,000-sf light industrial/multi-purposed building. This building is just beginning the design phase and will probably consist of 10 separate 1,500 sf areas for lease.

The DRBA has also recently constructed a new aircraft apron that can hold up to a 4 Gulfstream aircraft. This project was funded by the FAA and will enable additional hangars to be built with access to the runways.

The DRBA is reaching out to develop a positive relationship with the new city officials in Millville and have been approached by several solar farms. A future meeting of DRBA board members and John Ruga of NE Precast is being scheduled to discuss partnerships with air traffic and the new golf course.

Christy DiLeonardo, Workforce Development Update

Christy DiLeonardo, Division Director, reported on several statistical measures of workforce and employment. Within her building is housed the NJDOL labor exchange and her office works with this office to match job orders with unemployed or underemployed residents.

The in-demand jobs at this time are centered on Manufacturing (24%), Health care (18%), Construction (25%), Retail trade (14%), Transportation (9%), and Agriculture (6%). The smallest sector would be professional and technical jobs (4%).

The office is finding that many people who were contemplating making a change in jobs have decided this is the time to make the change, start a new business or work remotely. Many offices have found remote work to still be productive and it is changing the workplace. This is particularly true of sales and professional jobs.

The unemployment rate is currently 6.6%. A year ago, it was 8.4% and when the pandemic first started, we were at a low of 5.4%. The statistics definitely show a recovery is in process.

Many companies are taking advantage of the On the Jobs Training that Christy can offer. In 2021 a total of 43 employees representing \$133,144 in training dollars took advantage of the ability to learn a new skill while being employed. For the employer, this program covers 50% of the salary while they are in training for up to 26 weeks. This program is being used mostly by manufacturers. Christy reported that the training can also be an incentive for the employees to stay with the current employer. Based on the success of the county putting these dollars out to the business community, Cumberland Workforce has been awarded another \$300,000 in funding.

Jerry Velazquez, President/CEO The Authority Economic Update

Jerry reviewed some of the current projects and developments being implemented by the Authority through a PowerPoint presentation. The recovery is occurring in Cumberland, where the negative impacts of the pandemic were not as drastic as the surrounding counties due to our manufacturing base. Wages are up, employees are difficult to find, and working remotely is now routine in many companies.

The Authority is implementing a grant program for small businesses as part of the Covid recovery process. Businesses with less than 10 full time employees are eligible for up to \$10,000 in grant funds to aid in the recovery. To date 51 businesses representing \$505,000 have taken advantage of the program, with about 5-6 in the pipeline.

For our recovery we continue to focus on innovation through automation and state of the art improvements at the landfill. On the healthcare side the new wing at CCTEC is now open, establishing connections to the hospital system and college system. The MILL at RCSJ is offering highly technical advanced manufacturing, robotics, CAD drafting classes. Rowan Medical will be a new building on the RCSJ Cumberland Campus offering both direct service and educational resources. In the private sector, over 2 million square feet of development occurred in 2021 thru Jan. 2022. There are projects across the county including Agriterria and Jet East in Millville, new firehouse in Bridgeton, continuing expansion of NE Precast in Vineland and many inquiries about land in the redevelopment zone of Upper Deerfield. The cannabis industry has a significant interest in the county, with several companies securing land in industrial areas.

A big focus for the future of the county will be in infrastructure improvements. We are working with Sen. Cory Booker's office to obtain funding for two main types of infrastructure – traffic improvements such as Rt. 47/55 and extension of broadband. There are areas across the county, particularly rural areas that need access to broadband. The county is dedicating \$5 million of its American Recovery Act funding to develop the “middle mile” of fiber infrastructure so that private providers can then provide the “last mile” of connection to the homes and businesses. A system is being designed with redundancy with the adjoining counties with the hope that more competition will drive prices down and offer more options, better speed and better service. The timeframe for this is late 2022/early 2023.

Jerry reported that the BPU has been petitioned to enhance the electrical grid, particularly to provide service needed by businesses considering locating in the county. This is being done in

concert with Atlantic City Electric and the BPU, keying in on the redevelopment areas within the county as the primary places for increased service.

County Commissioner Reports: Carol Musso

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.

New Business: Meeting times

Kim will send out a Doodle poll to find out people's preferences with a meeting time. Previous meetings were over lunch, but today was a pilot of a morning meeting.

Respectfully submitted by,

Kim Ayres
Sr. Vice President Economic Development
The Authority