

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING CUMBERLAND COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD

**February 12, 2025
12:30 pm**

The advertised meeting of the Cumberland County Economic Development Board was held on Tuesday, February 12, 2024 at the Green Olive Restaurant, on N. Delsea Dr. in Vineland. Chairman Tony Stanzione called the meeting to order and explained that 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. A moment of reflection and Silent Roll call was completed.

ED Members present:	Tony Stanzione Donna Perez Jerry Velazquez Christy DiLeonardo Wade Sjogren Mayor Kelly Bob Carlson	Staff:	Kim Ayres Jody Hirata Jacqueline Galbiati
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Guests/Public Members:	Sandy Acevedo Nancy Ridgeway Bob Campbell	Commissioners:
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Jody Hirata, Special Projects for The Authority, spoke briefly to the Board, encouraging their attendance at a Meet-Up being sponsored by ChooseNJ. On March 12 at Terra Nonna Winery, there will be a presentation on logistics, tourism, and manufacturing in Cumberland and Salem Counties. Invitations are being mailed out currently.

A motion was made by Wade Sjogren, with a second by Donna Perez to approve the minutes of the Dec. 12, 2024 meeting. The motion was unanimously approved.

Officers of the board, per the by-laws, are selected at the first meeting of the year. The existing slate of officers were nominated to continue in their roles.

Tony Stanzione: Chairperson; Wade Sjogren Vice-Chair; Sandy Forosisky Secretary
A motion was made by Donna Perez with a second by Christy DiLeonardo to continue the leadership positions. Motion was unanimously approved.

The meeting schedule for the remainder of the year was approved as follows:
June 10; Oct 14; Dec 9. These dates have been published.

PRESENTATIONS:

Sika, UpperDeerfield:

Ethan Byler from Stanker and Galetto and Scott Joehlin, engineering manager for Sika provided an update on the ongoing construction at the Sika site. The site is located on Rt. 77 and Stanker and Galetto is the general contractor for the project. Their intent is to open before the end of 2025. Full production is scheduled for 2026. This site will be the northeast anchor site for Sika and it took approx.. 4 years to decide this site would be the best one for the northeast market. There will be 50-75 jobs created to start, including 25 salaried jobs. Sika is a Swiss company that is a full range mortar supplier.

Presently the production tower is being built at a height of 120'. Production rate will be 1 pallet a minute at full production. It was crucial to have a railroad spur that will come in behind the building. This was a critical selling point for the project location. Sika is currently working with our Workforce Development office for training and workforce hiring. Mr. Joehlin stated the partnership and cooperation Sika received in pulling together the project and site in Cumberland County was another key to locating here.

PierceTek, Vineland

Brandon Munson presented on behalf of PierceTek. Christy DiLeonardo introduced the company and said she became aware of them through Dr. Courtenay Bolden of RCSJ through their advanced manufacturing program. They have become a key training partner for manufacturing industries.

Herbert Pierce is the founder of Pierce Tek, which came into existence after he the Progresso Plant, where he work, closed. Herb had deep roots in the area and did not want to leave and a lot of experience assisting in plant management and equipment repair. He decided to start the company to provide field service and training in manufacturing equipment to be of assistance to plant managers. He now provides services to plants around the country and internationally. The goal is to provide efficiency and education to reduce the cost of production in manufacturing plants. They assist manufacturers, equipment producers and distributors, and educational institutions. They have a downtime response team, repair and maintenance team, troubleshooting team and they customize equipment. Most of their staff is from Cumberland County.

The Authority, Jerry Velazquez, County Economic Development

Jerry gave a brief update on the process in general used to attract businesses such as Sika. The Authority worked with Sika for several years, providing information and offering our offices for their meetings, and providing potential sites. Sika was actually a referral from another county that could not provide a site. The natural resources, transportation, and raw materials attracted Sika and play a key role in other locational decisions.

Once a company is interested, Christy DiLeonardo from Workforce Development is invited to present on the types of workforce training and assistance that can be provided to each company. Workforce is always one of the key concerns and the levels of assistance provided in Cumberland County are important considerations that become advantages for locating here.

We continue to work with the utilities to get infrastructure to capacity to meet the needs of some of these larger plants that are considering the county. We meet with ACE every two weeks and track projects requiring service as well as the electric infrastructure improvements that are ongoing across the county.

We are working with two food-based companies presently who are considering setting up facilities in the county. One is an Italian company, yet another international company wanting to establish a US presence in their market. They are looking to start at 45,000sf and grow to 100,000 sf. A second manufacturing company is interested in 100,000 sf.

There are a couple of solar projects and an interest in data center development. Electric supply is a concern for the later.

As statistics bare out, there was a 13% increase in ratable base in the county from the level of development occurring. Over 5 million square feet of new commercial/industrial construction was approved by the county planning board last year.

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Chairman Stanzione and Agric. Board Chair Alfred Gaggiano Jr. had each board member introduce themselves. Chairman Gaggiano gave a brief description of the work of the Agriculture Development Board and its importance to commerce in Cumberland County.

The minutes of the Economic Development Board meeting of October 8, 2024 were approved. Motion made by Christy DiLeonardo, second by Sandy Forosisky and unanimously approved.

Presentation by Matthew Pisaraki, Dept. Head of Planning, Tourism and Community Affairs

Matt Pisarski offered an overview of agriculture and its impact in Cumberland County. After a 29% decline in farm acreage from 1969 to the mid 1990's, acreage under active farmland has stabilized, with the average farm size of approx. 127 acres. This stabilization coincides with the introduction of the farmland preservation program in NJ.

There are 23,000 farmland acres preserved in Cumberland; the goal is to have 10,000 more acres entered into the program. Most of the preserved land is in Upper Deerfield and Hopewell Township.

Cumberland represents 20.5% of the states entire agricultural industry. We have 22% of all nursery and horticulture sales, with an average growth rate of 8.7%. Average cost of farming has skyrocketed, up 227% over the last 20 years. It costs an average of \$492,653 to operate a farm annually in the county. Agricultural workers represent 8% of the county labor force.

Farmers are battling the increased cost of fertilizer since Covid (up 65%) as well as supply chain disruptions.

Presentation by Jerry Velazquez, Pres/CEO The Authority

Jerry presented a brief overview of the work of The Authority. The Authority has operated the landfill since 1986. As is, the landfill will be able to accommodate solid waste up until 2041. There is work being completed to extend that to 2051. The Authority is the only improvement authority to be permitted to directly discharge leachate and it owns and operates its own micro grid from the collection of methane gas. A 15 mega watt solar facility in the planning stages. In the last year 200,000 tons of trash were collected and the Authority has an \$18 million annual budget

As the county's economic development entity, The Authority is a one stop resource enter for businesses, coordinates inquiries with state and federal entities, provides business financing, promotes downtown revitalization, and is an advocate for our businesses and industries. They provide various shared services across the county which accounts for \$485,427 of savings for the county.

With a construction management team, The Authority was able to facilitate 67 public facilities projects representing an investment of \$619 million, with a total economic impact of \$1.1 billion. The Authority is currently working on the design of a regional jail to be located in Salem County to service Cumberland, Salem and Gloucester counties. The project should be out to bid in May 2025 and will take 24 months to complete.

In terms of private development approvals, an average of 1.6 million sf has been approved for construction annually over the last 5 years. There was over 2.5 million sf approved in 2024 and 8 million total since 2020. This has resulted in a 13.4% annual increase in property valuation.

There are several major regional projects currently under construction:

- Trout National Golf Course (\$200 million, opening in 2025)
- Sika in Upper Deerfield, (\$120 million investment, 80 jobs); a Swedish company
- Weststar Aviation (Millville Airport; \$5 million initial investment) full service aviation facility
- Lassonde Pappas (\$200 million expansion, 200 jobs) This company was moving to Pennsylvania before they were convinced of expanding at their current location

Presentation by CRP Developers, Hurley Industrial Park, Millville

Mr. Joseph Nitti, partner in Commercial Realty Partners was introduced by Millville Mayor Benjamin Romanik to discuss their purchase of 240 acres in the James Hurley Industrial Park at the Millville Airport. CRP is planning on construction 5 buildings, including a hotel, for a total of 3.5 million sf. This would be a three phase project that would have 1,000 construction jobs and 1,700 permanent jobs. CRP has other large scale industrial projects in other parts of the state.

Mr. Nitti said the availability of labor was one of the key attractions to the Millville area. The first phase of the project is funded and the company is asking for a 30 year pilot thru the redevelopment designation. They are next to a 150 acre Green Acres site and as part of their agreement, they will maintain the site.

They plan on breaking ground on 2 buildings in 2025 for 1.5 million sf. This is considered Phase i. Phase II would be constructed from 2025-2029 and would be one additional building. Phase III would begin in 2028. All phases will be constructed with sustainable materials.

A key to the project is the extension of Nabb Avenue from Rt. 49 to Fairton Rd. to eliminate truck traffic in the downtown. The company is bonding \$400,000 toward this project that has been headed by the County. Mr. Sauro stated the project in on hold at this point.

Adjournment

Chairman Stanzione thanked everyone for their attendance and wished them Happy Holidays. With the conclusion of business the meeting was adjourned at 1:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Ayres
The Authority