

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING CUMBERLAND COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD

**December 12, 2024
12:30 pm**

The annual joint meeting of the Cumberland County Economic Development Board and the Cumberland County Agricultural Development Board was held on Tuesday, December 12, 2024 at the Maplewood III 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. Silent Roll call was completed.

ED Members present:	Tony Stanzione Donna Perez Jerry Velazquez Christy DiLeonardo Richard Taylor for Jim Piccone Cosmo Giovanazzi Wade Sjogren Paul Ritter	Staff:	Kim Ayres Jody Hirata Jacqueline Galbiati
Guests/Public Members:	Sandy Acevedo Nancy Ridgeway Howard Henderson	Commissioners:	J. Sauro

Chairman Stanzione and Agric. Board Chair Alfred Gaggiano Jr. had each board member introduce themselves. Chairman Caggiano 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