

Toms River Business Development Corporation  
Board of Directors Meeting

Wednesday, May 5, 2021; 8:00 a.m.

(Meeting conducted at BID office and virtually via Zoom due to COVID-19)

**MINUTES**

In attendance: Lou Amoruso, Bill Beining, MaryJo Buchanan, Lisa Cifretta, Tom Forgione, Dean Gresek, Dave Roberts, Mike Hovance, Marshall Kern, Georgette Kyriacou, Sandra Lazzaro, Danielle Norcross Bob Shea, Danielle Szcypinski and Rachel LaVoie-Dohn. Staff: Mairin Bellack, Kim Dippolito, and Liz Thomson. Guests: Congressman Andy Kim, Commissioner Joe Vicari, Councilman Matt Lotano, Ben Giovine. Not present: Mayor Hill, Tony Agliata, Gabe Gillen, John Brown, Lee Pelton, and Pam Piner.

- Called to order at 8:02 a.m.
- Introductions & Announcements: M. Bellack thanked everyone for being a part of the meeting. Prior to beginning the discussion with Congressman Kim, M. Bellack asked for the approval of the minutes to take place first.
- Approval of Minutes: A motion to approve the minutes was made by T. Forgione and second by M. Kern. The minutes were unanimously approved.

**Congressman Andy Kim Presentation:**

M. Bellack thanked Congressman Kim for being part of this meeting. She encouraged all the board members to raise their hand or type their questions in the chat area as the Congressman only has thirty minutes available. Congressman Kim gave an overview of the Federal Funds that will be received from the American Rescue Plan. Congressman Kim indicated that he is still waiting to find out from the Treasury Department the details of how the funds can be applied. The plan is to stabilize the economy as we come out of the pandemic. Congressman Kim is on the Small Business Committee in Congress and is aware of all the issues that businesses are facing coming out of the pandemic. Toms River will be receiving ten million dollars from the American Rescue Plan and the Toms River Schools will be receiving twenty-two million dollars separately through the plan. The funds will be distributed later in May. Congressman Kim shared that the funds will be earmarked for Covid related expenses and can be utilized in part for assistance for small businesses. Congressman Kim has had a roundtable with mayors from Ocean County as well as the school districts. At this point in the meeting, Congressman Kim opened up the forum for questions.

B. Shea thanked Congressman Kim for being part of this meeting. He asked the congressman if he could share with the board the formula that was used for the fund disbursement for the state of New Jersey. New Jersey will receive eight billion dollars and B. Shea wants to make sure that Toms River received their fair share of these funds. Congressman Kim shared that he doesn't have the exact funding formula at the moment. He believes that it is based on population as well as jobless claims, but he will dig into it and get back to B. Shea.

B. Shea asked who will be in charge of the funds? Will it be the state? Congressman Kim replied that this has been decided federally and it will come straight to the local municipalities.

B. Shea shared that funds going to small businesses would be great. A major problem that businesses are experiencing across the board is finding employees due to the extension of unemployment benefits. B. Shea asked for Congressman Kim if there is anything he is able to do from his end to help with this situation, it would be greatly appreciated. Congressman Kim shared that he has been to meetings with restaurants in his district and they tell him the same thing. He will also dig into this issue. He too is frustrated with those who are "gaming the system". Seasonal employers are also struggling with the J Visas. Congressman Kim will look into ways he can help out.

L. Amoruso asked the congressman about the FEMA clawback. L. Amoruso explained that Toms River didn't qualify for forgiveness and because of that Toms River owes FEMA six million dollars. He asked Congressman Kim to explain why Toms River did not get the forgiveness. Congressman Kim shared that he and Frank Pallone have been pushing that issue in Washington. He believes that it was unfair that Toms River didn't receive forgiveness. This was due to the fact that Toms River had been responsible and took strong leadership steps following Hurricane Sandy, and for that they are being dinged. Congressman Kim said that he would keep working on gaining support to try to rectify this situation. Congressman Kim also shared that he is working for families with the clawback while still being mindful of any potential fraud. L. Amoruso shared that the Mayor, Congressman Kim and he have been working on this issue and thanked Congressman Kim for his help and support.

T. Forgione suggested to Congressman Kim that a potential avenue to help with the unemployment issue would be to have unemployment applicants have to prove that they have been looking for work. This is how it was done years ago, and this could give workers an incentive to go back to work. Congressman Kim shared that if businesses are offering safe work environments, then he would like to see people go back to work. Part of the problem, he explained, is that all states have different unemployment requirements as well as many of the states have archaic systems so that makes it challenging to tweak the system.

M. Buchanan also shared that social services are also experiencing difficulties finding employees to work. This then effects the children, youth and families to whom they provide services. Congressman Kim thanked her for her input and information from the social service sector.

M. Bellack reported that she is looking forward to The BID getting a portion of the funds from the township to help the businesses downtown. Also, for reimbursement for the costs of running Downtown Night Out last year during the height of Covid. Congressman Kim thanked The BID for doing Downtown Night Out. He indicated that he would speak to the Mayor and discuss their plans for the distribution of funds in Toms River. Congressman Kim feels that police overtime should be eligible as well as upgrades for outdoor furniture used by businesses.

Congressman Kim shared some innovative ways that other towns are planning on distributing funds. Bordentown is planning on giving direct grants to businesses. He shared that there is a Restaurant Revitalization Fund that restaurants can receive on top of any other funds. His goal is to get people out safely and responsibly. He believes that it will take time to get our muscle memory back to going out. Congressman Kim would like to keep in touch with The BID to continue dialogue.

L. Cifretto shared that there is no assistance for not for profits who have volunteers rather than paid employees. Congressman Kim asked Ben Giovine to please get Lisa's contact information and they will have a follow up discussion.

D. Roberts explained that The BID Downtown Night Out is not eligible for the CDBG funding. This type of funding is different from the American Rescue Plan.

M. Bellack thanked Congressman Kim and B. Giovine for meeting with us and having an open door. She thanked them for providing clarity on the funding and hopes that we can continue to work together. B. Shea also thanked Congressman Kim for taking the time to meet with The BID. He would like to circle back to the questions asked during the meeting so that we can follow up on them. He invited Congressman Kim to come back any time. Congressman Kim said that he would stay on top of the issues discussed. He suggested for the next time we all meet again that we bring ideas for infrastructure as that is the next big legislative push in Congress. He will be looking to The BID for ideas going forward that would be helpful.

S. Lazzaro introduced Commissioner Vicari and he shared how he looks forward to continuing working together with Congressman Kim to help Ocean County. Commissioner Vicari appreciates what Congressman Kim has done to help Ocean County and is sure that in working together they will be able to get more done.

- Treasurer's Report (L. Pelton): No report
- Committee Reports
- Cultural Committee (L. Cifaretto): L. Cifaretto reported that the mural is almost finished. She shared how it has been a humbling experience. There have been over 200 people who have come to paint. The Appreciation Mural is to thank all of the essential workers who have worked tirelessly during Covid to keep us all safe. The mural will be going up on the retaining wall in the parking lot on Irons Street.
- Design (B. Beining)- B. Beining reported that the truck will be coming sometime in the next six weeks. Downs Ford will be wrapping it with our logo as well as theirs. He thanked the Boys Scouts for their help in cleaning up the waterline area by the Poseidon Academy. They were able to pick up 12 bags of garbage. He discussed the wall on the Irons Street parking lot where the mural will be going. It is overgrown and he will look into ways of getting it cleaned up before the mural is put up.
- Economic Restructuring/Land Use- B. Shea circled back to Congressman Kim asking The BID about the infrastructure needs. His suggestion is whether it is possible for the township to form an advisory committee to get a listing of ideas to represent a good cross-section of businesses. B. Shea asked Councilman Lotano if he could bring that back to the Township Council. S. Lazzaro indicated the County has been working on these items. Commissioner Vicari shared that he has worked to pass infrastructure ideas that would be essential to Ocean County along to Congressman Kim. There are a number of items that are vital. Ocean County is growing rapidly so there is a need for good infrastructure planning. He will send B. Shea the plan the County has put together and has been sent to Washington. It is important that any ideas we suggest be clear and concise. B. Giovine interjected that it is a good idea to have the thoughts and ideas put together. The infrastructure funding topic will be coming up in Washington soon. The American Rescue Plans are limited in scope and they are still waiting on the guidelines of how those funds can be used. Right now, it appears that water, sewer and broadband will be included in the American Rescue Plan. Funding for other areas of infrastructure is being discussed. He will keep us in the loop regarding the progress of that legislation. M. Kern suggested that the funds could be used for police costs. That may be an avenue if the Council determines that is a coverable expense. The dialogue on this issue will continue.
- Finance (L. Pelton) – M. Bellack reported that The BID has pre-registered for the NJEDA Phase 4. We did receive \$5,000 for Phase 3. M. Bellack shared the the Covid 19 CDBG fund will not cover costs from the expense of Downtown Night Out in 2020. We hope to apply for funds under the American Rescue Plan for reimbursement of funds spent for Downtown Night Out.

- Organization ( D. Szczypinski)- D. Szczypinski reported that the committee did not meet last month. She will be meeting with M. Bellack to re-vamp the committee.
- Promotions (Tom Forgione)- Councilman Lotano shared that he came to Downtown Night Out last week with Councilman Turnbach and Councilman Kopp and thought it was great. He shared that they will be watching how it goes this year with everything else being open again to see if a semi-permanent way to close that portion of the street down is warranted. That way police would not be needed, and the funds used for police could be used in a different manner. T. Forgione shared that all the events are on the website. The BID will be honored by the Monmouth Ocean Development Council for their Tourism Award. The dinner will be held on July 8, 2021. The BID will be purchasing an ad as well as a table of ten. M. Bellack encouraged any board member who is interested in attending to please reach out to her. M. Bellack shared that she will be working with T. Forgione on a logo to promote all of downtown Toms River. This will be used to bring people in from Monmouth and Atlantic Counties primarily. They are working on a strategic plan for advertising if any board members have suggestions, please let them know. T. Forgione brought up the idea of a pet parade. This will be discussed at the committee.

7. Colleague Reports:

Township (Mayor Hill, Lou Amoruso and D. Roberts)- D. Roberts gave an update on the Water Street redevelopment plans. The remaining issues have been resolved and an agreement has been worked out with Fair Share Housing. The next step will be a resolution at the council. If approved by the council, it will move to Planning Board. D. Roberts gave an update on the Robbins Parkway project. Regarding the VA, there has been no decision yet. B. Giovine shared that Congressman Kim has met with the VA making it clear to them that the re-bidding of the project was unreasonable and working to make them stick to their current timeline. He requested that any information regarding this project to please forward it onto Congressman Kim. D. Roberts shared that there is a draft ordinance to adopt the Coates Point Redevelopment Plan which is from Fischer Blvd. to the Mathis Bridge.

Parking Authority (P. Piner)- No report.

County (T. Agliata, N. Leaf) –M. Bellack welcomed Sandra Lazzaro from the county and expressed how much she is looking forward to working with her. S. Lazzaro shared her background and provided her email contact to the board.

Library (Rachel LaVoie-Dohn)- R. LaVoie-Dohn reported the library will be celebrating Asian Pacific Heritage month in May as well as Mental Health Awareness month. For both of these programs they have “take and make” projects for families. All of the events are on their website.

Chamber of Commerce (D. Norcross)- D. Norcross reported that the Chamber is having in person events and the attendance has been great. She reiterated that employment is an across the board issue for all businesses as they come out of the pandemic. She shared her excitement for the state to be opening up. She shared her willingness to help The BID get out information to their members.

Old Business: None

New Business: None

Adjournment: a motion to adjourn was made by B. Beining and second by T. Forgione. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 9:22 am.