

SEPTEMBER 13, 2018

Special Joint Meeting of the Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders and the Regional Center Partnership of Somerset County held at Somerset County Human Services Building, 27 Warren Street, Somerville, Conference Room One

Adequate public notice was provided on September 5, 2018 as follows:

1. Mailed to the Courier News
2. Posted on the Official County Bulletin Board
3. Filed with the County Clerk
4. Distributed to all persons requesting such information

FREEHOLDERS PRESENT: Mark Caliguire, Brian Gallagher, Patrick Scaglione and Patricia Walsh.

ABSENT: Brian Levine

REGIONAL CENTER PARTNERSHIP MEMBERS PRESENT:

Troy Fischer, Chair, Regional Center Partnership (RCP)
Jason Dameo, Vice-Chair, RCP
Victoria Allen, RWJBarnabas Health
Daniel Hayes, Mayor, Bridgewater Township
Chuck McMullin, Mayor, Raritan Borough
Ellen Brain, Mayor, Somerville Borough
Anthony Tufaro, Ethicon Somerville
Bernie Navatto, Somerset County (SC) Planning Board
Walter Lane, SC Planning Division
Mike Kerwin, SC Business Partnership
John Maddocks, SC Business Partnership (Alt.)
Filipe Pedroso, Bridgewater Twp. Council
Angela Knowles, Raritan Borough Planner
Dennis Sullivan, Somerville Borough Council
Richard St. Pierre, Somerville

ALSO PRESENT:

Non-voting County Support Staff: James Ruggieri, SC Planning Division

Non-voting Guests:

Chris Murphy, Esq., Murphy Partners, LLP
Kellen Murphy, Esq., Murphy Partners, LLP
Donna Allison, RideWise
Brian Auger, Somerset County Library System
Kyle Clonan, New Jersey Water Supply Authority
William Cooper, Somerset County Counsel
Melissa DeFreest, SC Business Partnership
Matt Loper, Somerset County Engineer
Peter Palmer, Bernardsville resident
Rebecca Perkins, The Perkins Partnership

Freeholder Director Patrick Scaglione opened the meeting at 4:30 PM by noting on behalf of the Regional Center Partnership of Somerset County, Inc., the Somerset County Business Partnership retained a professional consultant to examine the Grow NJ job economic development incentives program in relation to Somerset County. Freeholder Director Scaglione then turned the meeting over to Regional Center Partnership (RCP) Chair Troy Fischer. RCP Chair Fischer explained that in 2017 the RCP discussed with the Somerset County Business Partnership about a need to undertake a strategic economic development initiative to analyze the effectiveness and impact of the state's Grow NJ job creation and job retention incentives program on the Regional Center and Somerset County in light of what was learned from efforts to attract Amazon's new headquarters and keep LabCorp in Raritan Borough. RCP Chair Fischer then turned the meeting over to Somerset County Business Partnership Vice-President for Economic Development John Maddocks and Chris Murphy, Esq. of the Murphy Partners, LLP.

Mr. Maddocks and Mr. Murphy gave a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Ensuring the Economic Competitiveness of Somerset County" which provided an overview of the Grow NJ and how the program has benefited Somerset County primarily for job retention and how reauthorization of the Grow NJ program scheduled to expire in 2019 provides a real opportunity to advocate for business and incentive reforms. They presented the results of a comparative analysis between Somerset County and Jersey City in terms of the number and value of Grow NJ projects. The data showed a significantly disproportional amount of Grow NJ assistance being awarded to Jersey City than Somerset County despite very similar market conditions in both areas.

Mr. Murphy presented two case studies involving Bridgewater and Somerville to illustrate how Grow NJ assistance has been disproportionately awarded to projects in "urban" areas relative to the so-called "priority" areas which accounts for over 70 municipalities including those in Somerset County. Mr. Murphy explained this disparity is the consequence of the "limiter" clause in the Grow NJ legislation which stipulates that projects in "priority" areas are to receive the lesser amount of tax incentives per job than the same project in designated "urban" areas. With certain elements of the Grow NJ program scheduled to expire in 2019, Governor Phil Murphy's administration is examining Grow NJ and considering doing away with the Job Retention part.

Key findings indicate that, if the legislation is to be amended, given Somerset County's track record with Grow NJ in terms of job retention, emphasis should be made on elimination of the "limiter" clause and to retain the job retention component of the incentive program so that "priority" areas like Somerset County will have a more fair opportunity to compete for state incentive assistance. The next steps include acceptance of the *Suburban Disadvantage* report (the report's web link was emailed to everyone), then assembling a team of partners led by the Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders and supported by the Regional Center Partnership, the Somerset County Business Partnership, and Bridgewater, Raritan and Somerville. Then begin outreach to targeted audiences including Somerset County legislators, NJ Business Action Center, NJ Economic Development Authority, NJ Association of Counties, and NJ League of Municipalities.

Much discussion followed. The conclusion was that the Board of Chosen Freeholders will take the lead while being supported by the Somerset County Business Partnership and RCP; ideas and recommendations to be directed to the Freeholders.

The Freeholders closed the meeting at approximately 5:30 PM and the Regional Center Partnership closed their portion of the meeting.