

Metuchen Development Commission
Meeting Minutes
August 3rd, 2011

Attendees: Jack Altman, Audrey Gatling, Gideon Gelber, Laura Griffith, Jon Rabinowitz, JoAnn Sabatino-Falkenstein, Council Liaison Dorothy Rasmussen. Joined by local business owner, Janna Morishima. **Not in attendance:** Kevin Donahue, Munsamy Govender, Lynn Hendricks-Wong,

Meeting called to order at 8:10pm by Chairwoman Sabatino-Falkenstein. Minutes for the June meeting were reviewed and minor changes were suggested; minutes were then approved by G. Gelber and seconded by J. Rabinowitz.

Jon Rabinowitz gave a status update on the *Opening of Business in Metuchen* brochure. The brochure has been reviewed by the Mayor, Town Administrator Bill Boerth and Chris Cosenza, from the Zoning Office. The brochure will be subject to attorney review before made available to the public.

JoAnn Sabatino-Falkenstein asked Dorothy Rasmussen, Council Liaison, for an update on the Ground Floor Residential Ordinance. Ms. Rasmussen reported that it was a dead issue. The issue of an explosion of signage along Main Street was discussed and determined to be the bailiwick of the Zoning Office, which can cite owners.

Discussion turned toward the Pearl Street Parking Deck project, which has stalled due to lack of financing for construction. (In this economy, financing is only available for the development of rental properties.) The Pearl Street project lynchpin, an anchor property of 15-20,000 square feet of retail space, is missing in the plan formulation. Gideon Gelber shared the idea of a year-round covered market, with fresh local, organic produce and products would be a unique attraction that could provide the required anchor. The market, running along the sidewalk side of Pearl Street could be complemented with more temporary kiosks on the other side of Pearl, forming a diverse and interesting destination in Metuchen. Janna Morishima related her experience with a winter market in Morristown. The committee agreed that this possibility merited further study.

The committee revisited its proposed project of studying Franklin Square as a means of determining the impact of new development on services in town. The execution of this project would require using current tax maps to gather the universe of addresses within the area, working with the school district to assess the number of current school-aged children, and using this information to obtain the ratables from the tax collector. These statistics would afford hard data on the value and cost of future development.

JoAnn Sabatino-Falkenstein reminded the committee that Terri Sinatra, Superintendent of the Metuchen School District, will retire as of January 1st, 2012. The search for and selection of new leadership in the schools is an important community project that all residents and business owners should pay close attention and, where possible, participate in information gathering.

Gideon Gelber made a motion to adjourn at 9:37pm, seconded by Jack Altman.

Next Development Commission Meeting will be Wednesday, September 7th, 2011 at 8pm, Boro Hall.

Respectfully submitted by JoAnn Sabatino-Falkenstein