

The regular meeting of the **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE** (EDTF) for March 2016 was held tonight. Members in attendance were: Dwight Lewis, Ken Mirsky, Jonathan Essoka, Charlie Harmor, Caryl Levin, Judah Labovitz, and David Rosenberg. Guests present: Marianne Lynch, Executive Director, and Lauren Cartlidge, Development and Marketing Associate, from Habitat for Humanity Montgomery County. Staff present: Alyson Elliott, Assistant Township Manager.

1. **CALL TO ORDER.** Mr. Lewis called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.
2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES.** A motion was made by Mr. Essoka, seconded by Mr. Rosenberg, and unanimously passed to approve the minutes of January 19, 2016, and February 16, 2016.
3. **COMMITTEE REPORTS.**

**A. Design –**

- 1) *Signage Application for 427 West Cheltenham Avenue, Elkins Park* – Ms. Elliott presented information about the 15 sq. ft. sign to advertise The Korean Daily and 427 West Cheltenham Avenue. The sign will not be illuminated in any way and meets all applicable zoning requirements.

A motion was made by Mr. Lewis, second by Mr. Mirsky to convey to the Planning and Zoning Department support for the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed sign at 427 West Cheltenham Avenue, Elkins Park.

- 2) *Sign Review Process* – Members of the EDTF discussed their concerns with the current sign review process. Three issues were most prevalent: (1) the review process takes too long and is unclear, (2) design criteria appear to be arbitrary, and (3) EDTF may not be the best venue for sign review. EDTF members agreed that reducing red tape and making the process more clear, rather than making comments on aesthetics, is where they can be most helpful to the business community. It was a consensus of the EDTF to review this process and make recommendations for improvement.

**B. Liaison Reports – None.**

**4. CHAIR'S REPORT**

- A. **Montgomery County Department of Commerce.** Mr. Lewis said he has spoken with representatives of the Montgomery County Department of Commerce, which has a wealth of resources for helping promote and support businesses in the community. Through his work with the Senate, he will be working to recognize small businesses for Small Business week in May. EDTF may not be set up to do any promotion for Small Business Week this year, but he would like EDTF to consider adding it to the list of recommended activities. A local business Honor Roll might be a great way to promote the Township's businesses, whether it is for sustainable initiatives, community involvement, longevity in the community, or other notable reasons. Mr. Lewis said he would like to ask representatives from the Department of Commerce to make a presentation to the EDTF at one of its future meetings to talk about what they offer.
- B. **Promotion of the Township.** Mr. Lewis said promoting the Township as a great place to live and do business should be a key component of the EDTF's work. Since the

demographics of the community are aging, EDTF should consider ways to attract young people and serve the aging community.

Mr. Essoka suggested a “place making” campaign to help people know they are entering Cheltenham. Promoting our business districts or neighborhoods is good, but we should also look to promote Cheltenham Township as a whole. EDTF and the Township should consider placing “Welcome to Cheltenham, A Classic Town,” or similarly-messaged signs at all major entrance points to Cheltenham.

Mr. Labovitz said realtors are not doing a great job of selling our community. Mr. Lewis said it is important for the Township to put a good message together to help change realtor and property-buyer perceptions of the Township. Ms. Elliott suggested setting up focus group meetings with realtors, business owners and other groups to talk about how EDTF and the Township might be able to change perceptions of the Township and better serve their needs. She said this year might be a good time for the EDTF to perform a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis for the Township from this perspective. Mr. Lewis suggested adding “trends” to the analysis as well.

C. **Business Liaison Model.** Mr. Lewis said he does not think the Business Liaison model of the EDTF is beneficial to the Township. Ms. Elliott said she found a presentation Mr. Lewis created in June 2014 that she can provide to the EDTF for their next meeting. EDTF members agreed that they should look into this a bit more.

D. **Topics for Future Discussion.** It was the consensus of the EDTF that developing ways to increase its value to the Township is important. The following are three broad themes they would like to consider:

- 1) Developing and promoting policies and actions that make it easier to do business in Cheltenham Township;
- 2) Developing programs that promote businesses, business opportunities, and business development opportunities in the Township;
- 3) Developing and promoting policies and actions that create a sense of place, improve quality of life, and improve public perception of living and doing business in Cheltenham Township;

## 5. STAFF REPORT.

A. **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG).** Ms. Elliott announced that the Township will be submitting a 2016 grant application under the CDBG program for improvements to the La Mott Community Center, including replacing some of expired playground equipment. She asked the EDTF to sign a letter of support. She said projects like this are important to the quality of life in our neighborhoods. The Township was awarded \$170,000 in 2015 for improvements to the La Mott Community Center (new windows, sprinkler system, exterior lights, and other improvements). The Township is currently going out to bid for its 2014 project – street and sidewalk improvements to Cedar Lane and in 2013 and 2012, it made improvements to John Russell Circle North and John Russell Circle South. It was a consensus of the EDTF to support the Township’s 2016 CDBG grant application for improvements to the La Mott Community Center.

- B. **Community Conservation Partnership Program Grant.** Ms. Elliott also asked the EDTF to sign a letter of support for the 2016 grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) for Phase III of the Tookany Creek Trail. She explained that this project has received a \$400,000 grant from the William Penn Foundation and she has submitted a \$650,000 grant to under the Federal Transportation Alternatives Program, which she expects to hear about in June. This application was submitted in 2015, but while it was determined a High Priority Project by DCNR, it was not funded due to funding shortages. The Township will reapply to try to fund this project entirely through grants. She said this trail will eventually connect into a regional trail network and eventually the proposed East Coast Greenway Trail. It is a significant quality of life asset for the Township. A huge concern for completing the project is the proposed 135-foot long bridge over the Tookany Creek, which has more than doubled the original estimate for the project, so the Township is seeking additional funding sources to lower the Township's overall costs.

## 6. OLD BUSINESS.

- A. **Habitat for Humanity Neighborhood Revitalization Program Presentation.** Ms. Marianne Lynch, Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity in Montgomery County, spoke about the programs offered by Habitat aside from its new or renovated homeownership program, which people are most familiar with. She provided an overview of the following programs: Critical Home Repair, A Brush with Kindness, and Neighborhood Revitalization Programs, like Rock the Block. She explained how these programs are a "hand up," not a hand out. Residents are required to have income falling between 20% and 80% of the median income for similarly-sized households in the County, provide labor for the work being done on their current or future home, and to pay for the repairs. Habitat finances the work and works with property owners to establish payment plans that work for their circumstances.

Ms. Lynch said Habitat is working to ramp up their capacity to handle more "Critical Home Repair" and "Brush with Kindness" projects throughout the County. She said she is excited to have the opportunity to expand these programs into Cheltenham. Many of the recipients of the Critical Home Repair program are on average 64 years old and they use the program to finance roof, HVAC, and other necessary repairs that help make a home habitable in an affordable manner.

Members of the EDTF are interested in pursuing both the Critical Home Repair/Brush with Kindness programs and the Neighborhood Revitalization program. They agreed that the first steps would be the Critical Home Repair/Brush with Kindness program. They would like to evaluate the best way to promote it in the Township. Some thoughts they had include: promoting the program through the Township's regular promotion channels (website, Facebook, newsletter, etc.), utilizing Township staff (in particular Code Enforcement/Property Maintenance staff) and residents to make recommendations for the program, placing applications in the Township's Planning and Zoning Office, waiving or reducing permit fees for these projects (subject to approval by the Board of Commissioners), and utilizing EDTF connections to help organize projects.

Mr. Lewis said he would like to have Ms. Lynch make a presentation to community sometime this fall when EDTF takes its meetings into the community. They can host the meeting at either the La Mott or Rowland community center.

B. **Township Event Fundraising.** Ms. Elliott distributed draft event fundraising letters to the EDTF for their review. After review and discussion, it was a consensus of the EDTF, that fundraising for Township and community events does not fit with the vision they have for the future of the EDTF as they would like to focus on a limited number of impactful projects.

7. **NEW BUSINESS** – None.

8. **CITIZENS' FORUM** – None.

9. **ADJOURNMENT.** There being no further business, Mr. Lewis adjourned the meeting at 9:10 p.m.



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Bryan T. Haver, Township Manager

Submitted by: Alyson Elliott



Meeting Attendance Sheet



**Economic Development Task Force**

Tuesday, March 15, 2016, 7:00 p.m.

**Cheltenham Township Administration Building**  
8230 Old York Road | Elkins Park, PA 19027

(Please Print Clearly)

No.	Name	E-mail or Other Contact Info, if desired	Member (Y/N)
1	Jonathan Essoka	jessoka27@gmail.com	Y
2	<del>Dwight Pedrofero</del>		X
3	Ken Mirsky		Y
4	Caryl Levin		
5	JUDAH LABOVITZ		
6	Dave Rowley		Y
7	CHARLEY HAZMAR	CHARMMR@US REALTY CAPITAL.COM	Y
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