

Upper Mount Bethel Township Economic Development Committee

MEETING MINUTES

- DATE:** July 20th, 2025
- TIME:** 7:00 pm
- LOCATION:** Upper Mount Bethel Township Building
387 Ye Olde Highway
Mount Bethel, PA 18343
- PRESENT:** Scott Cole
Stavros Barbounis
Geoff Deen
Bill Hall
Anthony DeFranco
Martin Pinter
- ABSENT:** Ray Higgins
- GUESTS**
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Supervisor Jonathan Erler, Ron Angle, Tara Mezzanotte

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by committee Chair Scott Cole

Pledge of Allegiance

Administrative Updates

- **Meeting Minutes:** February and March minutes were reviewed and approved with minor edits.
 - **Website Progress:** Continued development of the EDC section, including bios, agendas, business directories, and legal notices. Directory formatting and hierarchy changes are pending Township input.
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Public Comment & Community Concerns

Data Center Negotiations

- Questions raised about the consultant hired to negotiate on behalf of the Township:
 - Lack of transparency regarding qualifications and scope.

- Concerns about inflated wish lists from fire departments and unclear negotiation goals.
- Proposal to explore alternative consultants, including Baker Tilly, for strategic planning and fair representation.

Foundation & Financial Oversight

- Discussion about the formation of a new foundation and its leadership.
 - Concerns about missing funds, lack of accountability, and potential legal implications.
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Wild & Scenic River Designation

- Debate over timing and impact of designation on industrial zones.
 - Recommendation to delay designation until after development begins.
 - Upcoming presentation by Tara Mezzanotte scheduled for August 19 to clarify findings and implications.
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Data Center Development Strategy

Economic Impact

- Strong support for data center development due to:
 - High-paying jobs and infrastructure investment.
 - Ancillary benefits: improved power, telco, and internet services.
 - Long-term growth in tourism, lodging, and local services.

Committee Representation

- Frustration over limited access to negotiations and lack of inclusion of EDC members.
 - Proposal to form a steering committee with delegates from all relevant sectors (Parks & Rec, Fire, Traffic, etc.).
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Strategic Planning & Consultant Evaluation

- Emphasis on vetting consultants with proven experience in data center negotiations.
- Suggestion to involve firms like Baker Tilly for strategic guidance and stakeholder alignment.
- Recognition that current consultant lacks due diligence and stakeholder engagement.

Zoning & Tourism Initiatives

Camping Ordinance Review

- Proposal to ease camping restrictions to encourage tourism and local business growth.
- Recognition of economic potential from short-term rentals and outdoor recreation.

Tourism Grant Update

- Application submitted for \$2,500 grant to support the Backroads Tour and brochure distribution.
- Potential \$7,500 budget for marketing and outreach if grant is approved.

Upcoming Events & Meetings

LVEDC Presentation

- Scheduled for August 28.
- Will cover regional development trends, data center growth, and demographic shifts.

September EDC Meeting

- Tentatively set for September 18.
 - Will include follow-up on Wild & Scenic presentation and consultant evaluation.
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