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HOUSE DEMOCRATIC POLICY COMMITTEE

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House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE DEMOCRATIC POLICY COMMITTEE HEARING
Topic – Supporting Main Street: State Resources for Small Businesses
Upper Providence Township Building – Upper Providence, PA
January 30, 2020

AGENDA

- 10:00 a.m. Welcome and Opening Remarks
- 10:10 a.m. Aliyah Furman Stanger
Southeast Regional Director
Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development
- 10:15 a.m. *Questions & Answers*
- 10:25 a.m. David Zellers
Director of Commerce Department
Montgomery County Planning Commission
- 10:30 a.m. *Questions & Answers*
- 10:40 a.m. Panel of Business and Policy Experts:
- Ryan Rosenbaum
Executive Director, Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce
 - David Maris
Co-Founder, Lower Providence Business Association
 - Dr. Joshua Weikert
Assistant Professor, Immaculata University
 - Stephen Barth
President, Barth Consulting Group
- 11:20 a.m. *Questions & Answers*
- 11:40 a.m. Closing Remarks

The L.P.B.A

Good morning, House Democratic Policy Committee. My name is David Maris. I am the owner of Marco Motors a small in business in Lower Providence. We are a family business that started in 1980 40 years ago.

Over the 4 decades a lot has changed some good and some bad. My parents had a lot of hurdles in starting our business and as time went on we became a success. We also were lucky in a way that we stayed involved in our community. My mother was at many Township meetings so we knew what was going on in the township as changes would occur. She got to know a lot of the people that were in our local government that if we had questions or see something that could affect our business we could address it.

For years Lower Providence had a reputation for not being a Business-Friendly township. Businesses would stay away. About 5 years ago the winds changed. We had a new group of Supervisors and others in our township that saw us being passed by. So behind the scenes they were working on different plans to change that image. As present business owners we were getting angry with the township. They sent out an inspector every year and the first couple years we did not have an issue. Then the inspector started to be not so pleasant and not willing to work with the businesses and started threatening to shut long-time businesses down.

We needed to address this,

In 2016 I met several people that had concerns for our businesses. Myself and our L.P.B.A. President Nathan Schadler and others started the L.P.B.A.. Our township started to take notice. The L.P.B.A was formed. The doors were open for working with our township, We were communicating and with our Township Supervisors working together we made a better business environment in a short period of time

* We had a mission.

Our Mission was to improve business conditions through the creation of positive communication channels between and among the business community and the township, aimed at promoting higher business standards and championing the growth and enrichment of both new and established businesses in Lower Providence Township.

Our concerns are local and state government passing regulations and laws that restrict our growth and also that deter us from succeeding.

We want to keep regulations and taxes low so we can keep growing and hiring to keep our local economy thriving. We would also would like to see our business owners take pride in our area and keep improving the exterior of their properties so all that pass thru Lower Providence say what a great place to have a business and want to do business in L.P. Thank you for your time.



Small Business Revitalization

What resources do small businesses need? Direct, personal guidance
(Main Street Managers/Consultants/Chamber Directors)

Individual business planning and forecasting
Financing - low interest loans
Marketing / merchandising assistance
Connections to local businesses and community
Multiple revenue streams - local, online, wholesale, etc
Design assistance, logo, signage, websites, social media

What do Towns need?

Updated Economic or Comprehensive plans focused on funding
Fund Planning Grants to communities

Barth Consulting Group, LLC

Downtown Revitalization & Economic Development Consultants

Qualifications: 2010-2020

Revitalization Clients:

Perkasie Borough - 2013 to Present
Collegeville Borough - 2019 to Present

Main Street Hatboro - 2010 to 2018 (completed)
New Britain Borough - 2013 to 2019 (completed)
New Hope Borough (Economic Study) - 2017 to 2018 (completed)

Opened 300+ new businesses over ten years
\$500 million of new investment
2,400 new jobs

Other Recommendations

Keystone Communities

\$15 million Budgeting for 40 Designated programs - line item

Funding is targeted to Designated Main Street Programs

Designation requires having a full-time Main Street Manager
Community events and sponsorships support Manager salaries

1,166 Municipalities - 956 Boroughs, 1,546 Townships, 56 - Cities

Recommendations:

Expand access to funding - immediate

There are other groups such as Chamber of Commerces' that can facilitate Main Street goals.

Many activities are event focused to support managers

Create two positions - event coordinator & Main Street manager

Activities base funding on events that create sponsorships for Main Streets or Chambers

Re-align activities to economic development

7. Has a paid, professional executive director.

Coordinating a Main Street program requires a trained, professional staff person. Ideally, the Main Street executive director's position is full time (generally 40+ hours per week). In small towns without the resources to hire a full-time executive director, a part-time director may be acceptable (generally 20+ hours per week).

Guidelines:

- ***The Main Street executive director should be paid a salary consistent with those of other community development professionals within the city, state, or region in which the program operates.***
- ***The minimum amount of time the Main Street executive director works each week should be consistent with comparable Main Street programs in the city, state, or region.***
- ***The executive director should be adequately trained—and should continue learning about revitalization techniques and about issues affecting traditional commercial districts.***
- ***The executive director has a written job description that correlates with the roles and responsibilities of a Main Street director.***
- ***There is a formal system in place for evaluating the performance of the executive director on an annual basis.***
- ***Adequate staff management policies and procedures are in place.***

Vacant Train Station to Restaurant

Seeks Historic Tax Credit
Needs anchor loan

Local Artist

Seeks mixed-use building for studio, gallery and living space

West Coast Pharma

Seeks PA manufacturing space
285 employees

PA Robotics Manufacturer

Seeks 100,000 sq/ft space
300 employees

Trends We See

Demise of Malls
Opportunity to Re-Imagine Downtowns
Walkable downtowns with public transportation
Online Shopping

Experiential Retail
Do It Yourself
Neighborhood Goods and Services
Eateries
Micro Breweries
Co-Working / Co-Sharing

Tech Changes

Uber
Lyft
Grub Hub
Door Dash



January 28, 2020

Good morning members of the Policy Committee,

My name is Pamela A. Kelly, President/CEO, The Chamber of Commerce for Greater Montgomery County, an 800 member organization representing businesses of all sizes throughout Montgomery County.

On behalf of our membership, I submit the following thoughts regarding issues facing small businesses. Support in the form of policy and programs would greatly benefit their ability to continue to grow and encourage new business start-ups both on main streets and underused commercial properties.

- 1- Minimum Wage – Business owners understand and support the need for employees to earn a living wage and in many cases are voluntarily adjusting their hourly rates. When considering legislation to raise the minimum wage, a timeline should be implemented with a gradual increase, allowing businesses to prepare and incorporate the additional expense into their annual budget.
- 2- Government Regulations – Members understand the need for government regulations, but ask that sound public policy be considered that allows businesses to continue to grow and thrive.
- 3- Investment in workforce – Businesses need policy, whether through programs or tax credits for education to train displaced workers or for those looking to learn new skills in order to upgrade their living standards. There is also a need for a state-wide campaign to educate parents and students of job opportunities whether through a college degree, trade schools or apprenticeships.

In closing, I appreciate the opportunity to present this information to the Committee. The Chamber is poised to assist the Commonwealth to ensure Pennsylvania remains a great place to live, work and raise a family.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pamela Kelly".

Pamela A. Kelly
President/CEO

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