

Township of Maple Shade  
 Business and Economic Development Commission  
 Maple Shade Municipal Building – Senior Room  
 January 21, 2025 – 6:30PM

**Meeting Minutes**

**I. CALL TO ORDER at 6:32PM**

**II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**III. PUBLIC NOTICE** of this meeting, pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act, has been given by the Director of Business and Economic Development in the following manner:

1. Notifying the Township Clerk December 27, 2024.
2. Mailing Notice to the Courier Post, The Central Record and Burlington County Times on December 27, 2024.
3. Posting Notice on the Official Municipal Bulletin Board on December 27, 2024.

**IV. ROLL CALL**

J. Bennett	X	K. Johnson*	✓	A. McVeigh*	✓	F. Punzi	X
L. Carsillo*	X	S. Kanicki	✓	J. Mortimer*	X	C. Thomas*	X
M. Constantine*	X	C. Kauffman*	X	J. Nixon	✓	S. Torrey*	X
S. Danson	✓	B. Loomis*	✓	B. Norcia*	✓	E. Wallace*	✓
A. Egner	✓	L. Marryott-Wiest*	✓	S. Nunes*	✓		

**V. CHAIRWOMAN'S UPDATE**

Presented by J. Nixon: Highlighted several significant activities and initiatives since the last BEDC meeting. The 2nd Annual Business Appreciation Night was successfully hosted at the Municipal Building, welcoming 60 guests, including Township leadership, Council members, and department heads. At the NJLM Convention in Atlantic City, valuable connections were established, notably with the NJ State Council on the Arts, who are eager to support the launch of a mural and arts program in Maple Shade. Additionally, resources and insights were gathered from state agencies to assist new businesses in establishing themselves locally. The Chairwoman also attended the Downtown NJ Conference in Montclair, NJ, where she was inspired by the transformation of Montclair's Main Street and a panel discussion on engaging younger generations in shaping their town's future. Following this, she reached out to Beth to explore collaboration with students on a presentation for the BEDC, focusing on their vision for Maple Shade's future.

**VI. PUBLIC PORTION**

Kathleen Tunney, the manager of Columbia Bank, introduced herself during the public portion. She noted that she took over the role after Jenn's departure and is already familiar with many individuals in the community. Kathleen expressed her interest in observing the BEDC to gain a better understanding of the business side of the town and get more involved as a resident. She remarked on the beauty of seeing this perspective and shared her interest in joining the BEDC.

**VII. TREASURER REPORT**

E. Wallace provided the Treasurer's Report, noting that the ending account balance of the original ABC trust account as of December 31, 2024, was \$7,890.10. The BEDC account balance as of the same date was \$193.12, and the new trust account for fundraising has a balance of \$2,876.70.

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**VIII. OLD BUSINESS**

**1. Paver Initiative/Fundraiser**

J. Nixon provided an update on the establishment of a new trust account to keep paver drive and fundraising money separate from departmental budgets, the original ABC account, and the BEDC budget, which turns into surplus at the end of the year. The new trust account, designated for fundraising activities, has a balance of \$2,876.70. From the launch of the paver drive until December 20, \$2,800 was raised, with an additional \$375 collected afterward, totaling 31 pavers sold. Nixon highlighted that outreach efforts for the paver drive included social media, newsletters, the website, and physical postings, yet some residents were unaware of the initiative. S. Danson suggested to expand promotion placing flyers in the library and possibly including information with tax bills. Kathleen Tunney offered to place one at Columbia Bank and K. Johnson offered to display it on his electronic sign facing the highway.

**2. Small Biz Bash Update**

J. Nixon provided an update on the Small Business Bash held on Small Business Saturday, November 30th. While she expressed some disappointment with the overall turnout, citing the unusually cold weather as a factor, she highlighted the success of one key element: Buddy the Elf. Buddy, who traveled from Kansas City for the event, spent the entire day engaging with the community on Main Street and at various businesses. He started at Market Off Main and visited locations like Tis So Sweet, L&S Chocolate, Maritsa's, Ziegfield's, Blush Nail Bar, Detangled Salon, Habitat Restore, Laurel Lanes, and Lickety Splitz just to name a few. His lively interactions, including chasing cars, entertaining diners, and mingling with visitors in businesses, were a major hit, drawing positive attention to the event and bringing joy to attendees. Nixon expressed gratitude to the BEDC for supporting Buddy's participation.

**3. Charles "Chuck" Drass Award**

J. Nixon provided an update on the Chuck Drass Award. During the last meeting, members received a packet with nominations, but only two were submitted, both for the same individual. Following a passive review process, with no objections raised, J. Nixon announced that Justin Bennett is the 2024 Charles "Chuck" Drass Award recipient. He has been informed of this honor, and details about the award presentation at an upcoming council meeting will be shared soon.

**4. Noon-Year's Eve Party**

J. Nixon provided an update on the Noon-Year's Eve Party, describing it as a fantastic event. The Senior Room, kitchen, and recreation rooms were filled with approximately 75 children, each accompanied by a caregiver, as it was not a drop-off event. The party featured a kid-friendly menu catered by Tony Roni's, including pizza, macaroni and cheese, chicken fingers, chips, and juice boxes. There was a face painter, arts and craft activities and the air hockey table saw lots of fierce battles. The highlight was the balloon drop, for which nearly 300 balloons were prepared, with special thanks to Sara for assisting the night before. The event also gained media attention, with a reporter from *The Inquirer* covering the celebration. Nixon emphasized the event's success and the joy it brought to attendees.

**5. Property Tax Card**

J. Nixon provided an update on the property tax card program. Following a meeting on November 17th and the program's presentation during the Business Appreciation Night on

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November 25th, a Zoom call was held on December 2nd at the BEDC's request, with nine participants. Despite these efforts, there are still unresolved questions about the program. As a result, it has been decided to table the discussion for now and revisit it at a later date. Nixon emphasized the importance of ensuring everyone is comfortable before moving forward with the program.

**IX. NEW BUSINESS/IDEA EXCHANGE**

**1. November Meeting**

J. Nixon brought to the group's attention that the November meeting falls during the New Jersey League of Municipalities convention again. To accommodate this, she proposed moving the November 18th meeting to November 17th. There were no objections, so it was confirmed that the November meeting will be held on November 17th instead of the 18th.

**2. Goals for 2025**

J. Nixon opened the discussion by reflecting on S. Danson's list of BEDC's past initiatives and events presented at the last meeting, seeking input on the group's goals and focus for 2025 to establish benchmarks for the upcoming year. S. Nunes suggested revisiting outdated ordinances, such as those restricting tattoo parlors, noting a missed opportunity with a prominent California tattoo artist, and highlighted the potential of allowing skate shops to complement the town's popular skate park. She noted that skateboarding has evolved into an Olympic sport and attracts many visitors from outside the town and tattoos aren't so taboo anymore.

S. Danson emphasized the importance of adapting to trends, citing the lasting success of breweries and distilleries. She praised J. Nixon's initiative of sending holiday cards to every brewery and distillery owner in New Jersey, which helped put Maple Shade on their radar for future expansions. Dr. Brewlittle's, an expanding local brewery, exemplifies how businesses can thrive while encouraging healthy competition to attract new dining and beverage establishments, diversifying the town's offerings.

S. Kanicki highlighted the need to overcome the perception that Maple Shade is unwelcoming to outsiders, stressing that Main Street businesses cannot survive solely on local patronage. She advocated for drawing in visitors with attractions like coffee shops and bookstores, which historically struggled due to limited support.

B. Norcia underscored the economic benefits of business growth, explaining that taxes from businesses help offset residents' taxes and improve the community's financial health. The group agreed on the importance of aligning future initiatives with resident and visitor interests to foster a thriving, welcoming environment.

J. Nixon presented a comprehensive list of goals for the BEDC to consider in 2025, emphasizing redevelopment, community engagement, economic growth, and internal operations. Key priorities include ensuring BEDC representation in the Township's 2026 Master Plan to focus on aesthetics, traffic flow, and the business mix, alongside assessing and enhancing highway commercial areas. Community outreach through business visits, forums, and partnerships with local organizations is central to gathering input and fostering collaboration. Economic growth initiatives include launching a marketing campaign to position Maple Shade as business-friendly, attracting new businesses, and supporting events like Business Appreciation Night.

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Infrastructure improvements, such as streetscape upgrades, were also proposed, along with funding strategies like paver drives and grants. Other objectives include conducting vacancy studies, enhancing communication through an annual report, supporting small businesses with resources and workshops, and integrating art and culture into the community. Nixon also stressed the importance of reviewing ordinances, proposing incentive programs, and strengthening the BEDC through member training, subcommittees, and focused planning. These goals aim to position Maple Shade for long-term success while aligning with community needs and aspirations.

J. Nixon concluded the discussion on BEDC goals by committing to email the detailed list of proposed goals to all members. She emphasized the importance of reviewing the goals, given the committee's bi-monthly meeting schedule, and encouraged members to identify actionable short-term goals for the first three months of the year, medium-term goals for six to twelve months, and long-term goals aligning with members' terms, many of which run until 2027. Nixon stressed the importance of collaboration and planning to ensure the BEDC can achieve its objectives effectively.

**3. Member Resignation**

Under new business, member S. Kanicki announced, with regret, that she is resigning from the BEDC and that this meeting would be her last. The group expressed their well wishes and encouraged her to remain involved by participating as a member of the audience in the future.

- X. NEXT MEETING is Tuesday, March 18, 2025 – Notice is being forwarded in accordance with The Open Public Meetings Act.**
- XI. MOTION TO CLOSE**
1. Motion to close- T. McVeigh
  2. Second to the motion- S. Nunes
- XII. ADJOURNMENT at 7:38PM**