

TOWN CENTER NEWS

A quarterly newsletter on revitalization and economic development in Montgomery County's traditional towns

2017
Winter



MEET DAVID ZELLERS, MONTGOMERY COUNTY'S NEW DIRECTOR OF COMMERCE

David Zellers joined the county's Commerce Department as the new Director of Commerce at the end of August. Most recently, he was with the Pennsylvania Downtown Center (PDC), a statewide nonprofit focused on community revitalization. During his two years at PDC, he traveled throughout the Commonwealth helping municipalities, along with local economic and community development organizations, address topics including strategic planning, financial sustainability, volunteer development, and project management. He also provided encouragement, counsel, and support for downtowns and neighborhoods that earned or were seeking designation as a Main Street or an Elm Street under Pennsylvania's Keystone Communities Program.

Dave has delivered presentations on economic and workforce development, entrepreneurship, business financing, community revitalization, and American government. Additionally, he has co-authored published research on the American presidency. Dave is a native of Berks County and a graduate of Conrad Weiser High School. He received his B.A. in Political Science from York College of Pennsylvania and M.A. in Political Science from Miami University of Ohio.

We asked Dave some questions about economic development. We're looking forward to getting to know him better!

Q: How did you get into your field?

The journey that led to where I am today began while I was attending Miami University of Ohio. I interned with the university's Center for Public Management and Regional Affairs (CPMRA) and its Director, Dr. Philip Russo, opened my eyes to what he called the "craft" of public administration and the opportunities, challenges, and sense of purpose that came with working on community and region-centric projects. Following graduate school, I was fortunate enough to have a temporary position with the workforce development system in the county where I grew up, and a short time later worked toward a position with the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, which exposed me to economic development possibility across the Commonwealth.

Q: What's changed over time in the field of economic development?

We are living in an age of greater accountability and austerity than ever before, and economic developers must be more mindful of the investments in time and money that they make. Therefore, we have to be much more data driven and be stronger advocates for a wider array of incentives and assistance within the context of what makes sense in each unique situation. Creativity, passion, and being unafraid to tell people what they need to hear and not what they want to hear are key. What has not changed and will never change is that economic development is a personality and relationship-driven field. The most important thing now is to always maintain personal and organizational integrity, deliver tangible results, and keep in mind that economic development has to offer something for everyone in a community, a county, a region, and beyond.

Q: What's on the horizon for 2018?

The year ahead for Montgomery County's Commerce Department is going to be an exciting one. We will be adding new team members, making updates and changes to the county's business financing portfolio, and strengthening our relationships with our fellow county departments, the municipalities of Montgomery County, and a whole host of stakeholders that serve the greater



For additional information, contact the Montgomery County Planning Commission at 610-278-3722 or visit www.montcopa.org/planning

Montgomery County region and the Commonwealth. It is going to be a great year of working together with so many others to tell the story of Montgomery County and to build a more vibrant economic and workforce development system.

Q: What's your favorite place in Montgomery County?

Having moved to Montgomery County just a few months ago, I am still getting out and exploring. My favorite place in Montgomery County is usually the place I just visited. We are so fortunate here to have such great natural beauty, dynamic Main Streets, and nationally recognized attractions all within our daily lives. There are not many places in the world where you can start your day with a hike along a scenic trail, spend the afternoon at a premiere shopping destination, and then in the evening enjoy a great dining and entertainment experience in an authentic downtown. I look forward each day to the opportunity to spend time in a different part of the county and to understand how all the people, places, and businesses come together to create a better place for us all to live and work in.



SHOPPING LOCAL IN ARDMORE—WITH A TWIST!

It goes without saying that our business improvement districts and Main Street organizations want to encourage people to support local businesses with their shopping dollars, especially during the holidays. The Ardmore Initiative has relaunched its Downtown Dollars program with \$15,000, made possible by a grant from One Ardmore Place.

This allows shoppers to double their purchasing power this holiday season. Shoppers were given the opportunity to enter an online lottery to be randomly selected to purchase Downtown Dollars. Those picked in the lottery can purchase a gift card for \$25-\$100 and receive an additional Downtown Dollars gift card for the same amount, redeemable at participating Ardmore businesses, and doubling each shopper's purchasing power. The Downtown Dollars do expire within 3 months of being activated, encouraging people to shop locally (and soon!) for their holiday presents. Downtown Dollars can be used at a variety of local businesses, including toy stores, restaurants, salons, and apparel stores.



Montgomery County Board of Commissioners

Valerie A. Arkoosh, MD, MPH, Chair
 Kenneth E. Lawrence, Jr., Vice Chair
 Joseph C. Gale, Commissioner

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Schwenksville has taken a big leap forward by adopting the new "[Main Street Schwenksville Streetscape Plan and Design Guidelines](#)" to provide guidance for property improvements along the Route 29 corridor. Schwenksville has a mix of uses along its Main Street, with plenty of historic buildings filled with residents, civic uses, and lively businesses. The guidelines are for borough officials and employees to ensure consistent design decisions moving forward but also for property owners looking to invest in their own developments in the borough. This publication covers much of the public realm—including items such as sidewalk paving standards, crosswalks, plantings, bollards, and street lights.

The design guidelines cover both main thoroughfares of the borough—Main Street and the Perkiomen Trail:

- Main Street Zone: All properties and sidewalks with primary frontage on Main Street as well as all intersections with and crossings of Main Street.
- Recreation/Trail Zone: Properties and rights-of-way that constitute the Perkiomen Trail, Meadow Park, and any future parkland or open space.

With so many "Main Streets" in Montgomery County, design guidelines are a good way for municipalities to gain some control over the look of their downtowns (as well as continuity) with a detailed plan in place.



Downtown Schwenksville has much to offer.

Montgomery County Planning Commission Board

Steven Kline, Chair
 Dulcie F. Flaharty, Vice Chair
 Robert E. Blue, Jr.
 Jill Blumhardt
 David L. Cohen, AICP
 John J. Ernst, AIA
 Scott Exley
 Charles J. Tornetta
 Rev. John H. West, III
 Jody L. Holton, AICP, Executive Director

