

Hunterdon Economic Development Sites Tour Highlights How Stockton Market Adapted To COVID-19 Rules

The Hunterdon County Freeholders' tour of Economic Development projects continued recently when Board Director Shaun C. Van Doren and Deputy Director Susan J. Soloway visited with the businesses at the Stockton Market in Stockton, gaining insight into how the county's farmers markets have adapted to the COVID-19 rules and thrived in 2020.

The site visit was another for the Freeholders along the county's newly established Hunterdon 579 Trail, a new initiative aimed at marketing and promoting the businesses and farms that makeup the county's agribusiness and agritourism sectors. The Freeholders' previously met with the owner of Mount Salem Vineyards another 579 Trail venue.

Van Doren and Soloway, along with Economic Development Director Marc Saluk, spoke with the markets' merchants, learning how the market successfully navigated the start of the COVID-19 pandemic by adding a grocery store, changing their business practices, and emphasizing safety and public health.

"The Stockton Market's efforts to continue to operate and provide food options to the public during the COVID-19 challenge demonstrates a high degree of business acumen," commented Soloway, the Board's economic development liaison.

"I also commend the county health department for its cooperative effort to create an approved list of pandemic protocols for the Stockton Market and all other Hunterdon markets."

Market merchants meeting with the Freeholders included; Highland Gourmet, BBQ 434, Market Pizza, Maria's Cusina, Market Coffee, and D Town Dumplings. Each merchant outlined their initial adjustments to the pandemic when they made it their mission to continue to offer a safe, local option for residents to easily find fresh food and supplies.

"It's great that the Freeholders have taken the time to see this success first hand and to know that they prioritize the county's market's and agricultural sectors so highly," commented Market Pizza proprietor Megan Holt. "Everyone here has pitched in to ensure that the entire market has remained a resource for residents"

Holt added that the result is that the market has found and maintained an entirely new customer base.

Soloway added, “We’re extremely fortunate to have a group of merchants so committed to the population, to doing business safely, and to aiding other Hunterdon businesses during a time of crises”

The Freeholders’ economic development sites tour is focusing on business projects along the Hunterdon 579 Trail, in addition to locations with county-funded development projects. Previous stops have included a visit to the site of the future county park along the Delaware River in Milford, along with the tour of Mount Salem Vineyards in Alexandria.

“Agriculture has long been a fundamental part of the Hunterdon economy and will continue to be for a very long time,” stated Soloway. “And the board intends to support the sector in every possible way.”