

Hunterdon County Freeholders Visit Economic Development Project Sites Along Recently Launched Hunterdon 579 Trail

Hunterdon County Freeholder Board Deputy Director Susan J. Soloway recently visited Mount Salem Vineyards, along with Freeholder Board Director Shaun C. Van Doren, as part of a Freeholder Tour of Economic Development project sites along the Hunterdon 579 Trail, gaining first-hand insight into the abundant availability of locally grown food, agricultural products and business opportunities in the county.

Freeholder Deputy Director Soloway, Economic Development liaison, reported at the September 15th Freeholder Meeting, “Mount Salem Vineyards founder and proprietor, Peter Leitner, Economic Development Director Marc Saluk, Freeholder Director Van Doren, and I discussed the state of the agribusiness sector and its related economic opportunities in Hunterdon County. During several site visits around the county last week, we had the opportunity to gain on-site, firsthand insights about the value of the county’s economic development programs and municipal grants, from local officials and business people.”

Mount Salem Vineyards, which was established in 2005, is an artisanal, critically acclaimed winery near Pittstown in Alexandria Township, offering handcrafted wines that are sustainably grown.

Mr. Leitner has been working with the county’s Economic Development office on ideas that could potentially encourage local food innovation and entrepreneurship as a central component of the county’s economic development strategy. Ideas discussed include the possibility of opening commercial kitchens, increasing farm to table focus, and concentrated efforts to encourage and incentivize the growth of agricultural business overall.

“Hunterdon still has significant untapped potential to develop these aspects of the local economy and it’s great to see county leadership so interested in exploring this. Mount Salem Vineyards looks forward to continue it’s partnership with their efforts,” said Mr. Leitner said.

Marc Saluk, Economic Development Director, said, “An important piece of the effort that’s already underway is promoting our existing agribusiness and agritourism assets. This started this year with the launch of the Hunterdon 579 Trail initiative, which markets the county’s farms, farm stands and abundance of locally grown products, and will continue to expand.”

Freeholder Soloway concluded, “The Freeholder Board is grateful to Peter Leitner who, among others, worked with economic development to create and launch the 579 Trail. His willingness to lend his expertise to this and other initiatives is very appreciated.”