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Warren County Commissioners Honor Two Local BID Directors

By Art Charlton

WASHINGTON BOROUGH, NJ – The directors of the two local Business Improvement Districts in Warren County were honored by the Warren County Board of County Commissioners during a meeting held in the community that one of them serves.

The Commissioners held the second of three traveling meetings scheduled for 2024 at the Washington Borough Municipal Building, where they presented Certificates of Merit to Washington BID Executive Director Melanie Thiel and Hackettstown BID Executive Director Laurie Rapisardi.

Earlier this month, Thiel was named the Mount Olive Area Chamber of Commerce Business Person of the Year and Rapisardi received Centenary University's Gold Dome Award for the generous contributions to both the university and the Hackettstown community.

"I'm so hopeful that other communities in Warren County can see the work that's happening" in Hackettstown and Washington, Commissioner Director James R. Kern III said. "You've turned your main streets into attractions" with breweries, restaurants, and other activities that attract people, Kern said to Rapisardi and Thiel.

As Executive Directors of their respective Business Improvement District (BID), both Thiel and Rapisardi contribute significantly to the growth and vitality of local businesses in Washington Borough, Hackettstown, and the larger area as a whole.

Between the BIDs they host nearly two dozen large events every year that are aimed at raising awareness and drawing attention to the local businesses and downtowns, including Northwest New Jersey's largest music and street festival, the Festival in the Borough.

The BIDs also work to bring new businesses to their respective municipalities, encourage visitors to support shopping at small and local businesses, and work to provide clean, safe, and aesthetic downtowns.

Both women serve on the Warren County Economic Development Committee, while Rapisardi also chairs the Warren County Bicentennial, Cultural and Heritage Advisory Board.

"These two ladies are the hardest working people in Warren County when it comes to economic development and businesses," Commissioner Jason J. Sarnoski said, adding, "You can see it in the downtowns, and how vibrant and successful they've been."

"You've brought attention to this town" and "really brought it back," Commissioner Lori Ciesla said to Thiel, before praising Rapisardi for her efforts both locally and spearheading the volunteer committee working on the county's bicentennial celebration.

"It's a joy working with Mel, collaborating with Mel," Rapisardi said, before thanking the commissioners for their support "for all of our towns."

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