

'Sopranos' actor makes coffee stop in Tamaqua

Community representatives met with filmmaker about proposed studio complex

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A Pennsylvania filmmaker who wants to build a \$30 million film studio complex in Tamaqua brought a star-studded cast to the borough Friday.

In return, borough business- and representatives rolled out the red carpet for Robert J. Morgalo, of OPF Film Studios; Federico Castelluccio, who is best known for portraying Furio Giunta in "The Sopranos," and others.

"(Castelluccio) and his wife, actress/producer Yvonne Maria Schaefer along with my business partner Ozz Gomez, were in Tamaqua most of the day on Friday for a meeting regarding the film studios," Morgalo said.

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Melissa Mravlag of Hope & Coffee waits on actor Federico Castelluccio, best known for his role in 'The Sopranos.' Castelluccio was in Tamaqua Friday to discuss plans for the proposed OPF Film Studios. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



Shown here following a meeting about the proposed OPF Film Studios in Tamaqua, from left, are: Dane Watro, Republican candidate for the 116th Legislative District; Yvonne Maria Schaefer, actress; Federico Castelluccio, actor and OPF partner; Robert J. Morgalo, OPF Film Studios; Gary Baumann, Arctrust real estate development trust; state Sen. David Argall; Ric Ciappa, Arctrust, and actor Ozz Gomez. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

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The group met at Hope & Coffee, strolled along Broad Street and stopped at La Dolce Casa.

"I can tell you that things are moving along and looking good. We have selected a location and are currently in negotiations with the land owner," Morgalo said. "We are now doing our due diligence as we proceed with our plans to open a major film production studio in Tamaqua."

Real estate development partners Chief Executive Officer Gary Baumann and Ric Ciappa from Arctrust, a private real estate investment trust; state Sen. David Argall; Micah Gursky, executive director of the Tamaqua Area Community Partnership; Daniel Evans, chairman of Tamaqua's Community Revitalization and Improvement Zone Authority and others were on hand.

Gursky said the borough continues to work with Morgalo and his partners to support plans to establish a film studio.

"We discussed and visited various locations and gave their team a general introduction to the Tamaqua community," Gursky said. "Everyone, especially the crew at Hope & Coffee, La Dolce Casa's team, and the Tamaqua borough representatives, was welcoming. They provided a great first impression."

Melissa Mravlag was working at Hope & Coffee when the group arrived. She saw some familiar faces — like Gursky's — but didn't immediately recognize anyone



St. Luke's Fellowship-trained orthopedic surgeon Dr. Justin Miller of the Tamaqua Medical Center, stopped in at Hope & Coffee Friday and ran into actor Federico Castelluccio.

else.

"I overheard that someone from 'The Sopranos' was there," she said. "I thought, 'OK, this is kind of cool.'"

When a photo of her serving Castelluccio appeared on Hope & Coffee's Facebook page, she received a message from one of her friends.

The friend asked: "Do you know who you were in the picture with?"

"I wasn't fan-girling at the time, but over the weekend, I began looking at the names and I thought, 'Oh, my God,'" she said.

Mravlag learned that Castelluccio played a hit man in "The Sopranos."

"He was so nice. He didn't act like his character from 'The Sopranos,'" she smiled.

Morgalo, who is also an actor, writer and producer, has more than 40 film and television credits, including spots in some of Mravlag's favorite shows like "Law & Order: SVU," "Blue Bloods" and "New Amsterdam."

Schaefer is an actress, producer and founder of the film production YMC Films.

"It was a really neat experience. Like I said, everybody who came in was really, really nice," Mravlag said.

Morgalo's plans for OPF Film Studios include a massive film studio complex with a hotel, catering facility and day care.

"Although this is not a done deal yet. I am optimistic that there will be a lot more star gazing in Tamaqua moving forward," he said.