

SEDAC - An old idea with a new twist

Joe Conaway, Chair

Back in 2007, a group of Sussex Countians came together as a result of a recommendation that grew out of the Sussex County Today and Tomorrow Conference. It was clear to us that Sussex County needed an independent economic development organization. That effort resulted in a meeting on April 28, 2008 that led to the creation of the Sussex Economic Development Action Committee (SEDAC). One of its first actions was to recommend to the Sussex County Council that they should reinstate the office of Economic Development with proper staffing and resources. That action was taken by the County and a new Director was ultimately hired. In fact, Bill Pfaff, the County's new Economic Development Director was part of that first meeting and a charter member of SEDAC,

With both State and County personnel in place, SEDAC began the long process of developing an economic plan that could reduce the loss of our young people to better paying jobs outside of Sussex County, the retention of the industries and businesses already in Sussex, support of both our agriculture, and tourist economy and the attraction and development of new industries and jobs in our County.

Since that first meeting, SEDAC has been responsible for a number of things in Sussex County. We began the "Sussex County, Open for Business" program in 2011 and it continues today. This program created a one-stop shop offering information on funding, business consulting and training. This program serves both startups and established businesses seeking to expand. It is located at the Sussex County Emergency Operations Center at the Airport and is scheduled for 8:30 am on the third Thursday of each month.

When the economy in Sussex turned sour, it was SEDAC that went to the Sussex County Council and persuaded them to pass an Ordinance that extended the time that the business community had to complete subdivisions, conditional use applications and residential planned communities. The action of the County Council saved thousands of jobs and protected the County's property tax revenue. Sussex County was one of the few counties in the United States that recognized the importance of preserving those jobs and revenues through such a time extension. It was the ONLY County in Delaware to do so.

We could continue to point out the efforts of SEDAC to properly grow the county and to work to attract those jobs we so vitally need but you can find a complete list of our accomplishments on our web site at sedac-de.org.

When this organization was formed, and since that time, we have wanted SEDAC to be an effective,

independent organization, focused on economic development in Sussex. We present a diverse talent pool of volunteers who have worked diligently to bring jobs and businesses to our county, but today we face challenges. Some success has occurred but more needs to be done and, yes, HAS to be done. Towards that end, we have begun the process of self-evaluation with a determination to improve our efforts in economic development.

In the following months we will reach out to all of Sussex County. To the Chambers of Commerce, the municipalities and our County Council, we will offer our assistance and talent to meet our objectives of providing jobs for our youth, protecting our existing businesses, promoting both agriculture and tourism and the growing of a business and industrial base that will sustain all of Sussex in the future.

Please check our web site for other members of SEDAC. If you have a problem with growing your business, we may be able to help. Reach out.

We meet the fourth Friday of each month at 9:00 AM in the Student Services Center at Delaware Technical and Community College in Georgetown. All are welcome. Bring your ideas and talents - TOGETHER we will make Sussex County even greater than it is.