

## **October 2020 ~ Economic Update**

### **Downtown Development Districts**

Recognizing that healthy and vibrant downtowns are critical components of Sussex County's economic well-being. Sussex County Council is proud to be a partner in Delaware's Downtown Development District (DDD) program. Sussex County Economic Development is providing a matching grant incentive to be utilized in any Downtown Development Districts approved by the Office of State Planning and located in Sussex County. This matching grant would be dependent upon all limitations and conditions as established by the Delaware State Housing Authority (DSHA) and would only be provided as a match to and in instances where a State of Delaware grant has been approved by the DSHA. **January 2020 thru September 2020 we have granted \$64,123 in Downtown Development Districts.**

### **Edge Grant Program Positively Impacting Sussex Businesses~ Pfaff Serving on Grant Judging Panel**

What is one key to assisting entrepreneurs get their business idea off the ground? How do you help small businesses scale? Add new employees? Offer new products or start a second location?

The Edge Grant can be the answer for those with a solid business proposal in Delaware. The Edge Grant is an initiative of the Delaware Division of Small Business. The 3-1 matching grant program provides qualified small businesses "an edge" when accessing capital.

There are two categories: Entrepreneur, which provides up to \$50,000 per applicant, and science-technology-engineering-match (STEM) based, which provides up to \$100,000 per applicant. To qualify, businesses must be newer than five years and employ 10 or fewer workers. Businesses must have their operation located in Delaware and not previously received a state grant.

To date, more than 250 small businesses have competed for the Edge Grant. Most recently, Graphix Impact, located in Seaford, was awarded a grant of \$50,000 in the entrepreneurial category for the purchase of a second bucket truck to expedite sign installation.

Sussex County Economic Development Director Bill Pfaff was tapped with other economic development professionals and business leaders in Delaware to review and recommend grant winners.

Having been a small business and worked with hundreds of small businesses in Sussex County for the past 30+ years, it's interesting to see the ideas brought forth by our entrepreneurs. As long as the grant program exists, it should continue to bear fruit for new and expanding businesses in Sussex County.

## **Sussex County Winners:**

### ***Impact Graphix and Signs (Seaford) \$50,000***

This woman-owned business installs commercial signs and awnings in southern Delaware and on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. It will use the grant to purchase a second bucket truck to better meet demand for the company's services.

Those interested in learning more and the guidelines and the process can visit the website:  
<https://business.delaware.gov/edge-grants>.

## **County Economic Development and County Officials Tour Emeca SPE USA in Laurel**

Sussex County Council President Mike Vincent, County Administrator Todd Lawson and Economic Development Director Bill Pfaff toured Emeca SPE USA, a manufacturer located in Laurel.

Emeca manufactures steel piling joints for casting into pre-stressed concrete piles for deep foundations.

The product, which is easily installed, strong and cost-effective, was developed by leading-edge piling specialists at Emeca Oy in Finland, and then brought to the U.S. by owner Michael Jahnigen, a pioneer in the pile-driving industry.

The Laurel plant can customize splices to specific size, shape and strength needed to meet required customer specifications and regulations.

They also manufacture pile shoes, casting guides, locking pins and related accessories that complement any concrete pile needs.

## **Resources to Assist the Sussex Business Community in the Face of Covid-19**

March 20, 2020 Sussex County Economic Development created a resource guide for the Sussex County Business Community. During Covid-19, Sussex County Economic Development has assisted many of the Sussex County Business community work thru the process of applying for both Federal and State loans to stay in business. We continue to assist business in working thru problems in the loan process. For periodic updates, visit the Sussex County Office of Economic Development Facebook page, or [www.exciteSussex.com](http://www.exciteSussex.com).

## **Keep Sussex Strong ~ "Locals Buying Locally Matters" Campaign ~ Covid-19**

Sussex County Economic Development shifted money (**\$65,000**) in its advertising budget at the approval of County Council to create this campaign. We asked Southern Delaware Tourism to partner with us.

We created several TV commercials, Radio segments and Print pieces using business in Sussex County to promote the campaign. A successful Sussex County comeback relies on each of us – on our entire community coming together to support local businesses and organizations to Keep Sussex Strong.

Locals buying locally keeps Sussex working, playing, and dreaming. It preserves the character of our communities. It supports our neighbors' businesses and their employees' jobs, and, in turn, benefits all of the local businesses they count on every day. It supports the local arts and entertainment, museums, attractions, activities, and community organizations that enhance the unique quality of life we all enjoy here. And it encourages the entrepreneurial and artistic spirit that keeps this very special place thriving. <https://excitesussex.com/keep-sussex-strong/>

### **Sussex County Kitchen Incubator**

Sussex County Economic Development is cooking up a kitchen incubator that aims to support the local economy by providing the overhead and support for entrepreneurs to get started.

July 2020, we received \$150,000 from Delaware's current bond bill, the Sussex County Economic Development office will start a state-certified kitchen that would be rented out on a daily or monthly basis. That seed money could be used to build out a kitchen. Sussex County Government will be supplying the building at the Delaware Coastal Business Park.

Chefs can use this, caterers can use it food trucks can use it, and even farmers will use it for value-added products. This is an advantage to the restaurants because we will be a training ground for future employees ... [there is] huge potential for business expansion and business creation, which again down the line will create jobs

The estimated total cost of the project lies between \$300,000 and \$350,000, and the Economic Development office will soon ask the county for additional funding. The hope is that membership fees could support its operations in the long run.

### **Delaware Coastal Business Park Update**

Construction continues 2 new businesses in the Delaware Coastal Business Park. During Covid-19 we have had an increased number of calls from business both inside the County and outside the State of Delaware interested in space in the Park.

Over the past few months, we have been working on Foreign Trade Zone Warehouse in our Delaware Coastal Business Park and planning to open first quarter of 2021.

### **ExciteSussex Loan Program**

During Covid-19 the fund closed on 2 loans at the tune of \$1,605,000 and total of 27 jobs: one of the loans was business attraction- out of PA and the other was local expansion. During 2019 and 2020 we have funded projects totaling \$2,590,000 with a total of 48 jobs. We are in the process of working with a Sussex County business expanding with a loan request valued at \$1,700,000 with a total of 61 jobs.

Bill Pfaff  
Economic Development Director/Sussex County