Fields, Dreams and Farewells

SEDAC met by Zoom on July 24, 2020 and heard from Joe Schell concerning the soon-to-be-opened Sandhill Fields Sports Complex. He also provided some pertinent comments on education in Sussex County. As to the Sports Complex, barring any unforeseen circumstances, the fields will be available in September. This complex will bring additional playing fields for soccer and lacrosse in Sussex County and open our county to additional tournaments. It will add, conservatively, three to four million dollars to our local economy and be available to Sussex Countians as well. Sandhill Fields will join the Sports at the Beach Complex developed and run by Pete Townsend which , over the years, has added millions to the economy of Sussex County. Joe also pointed out that Sussex Academy, located just across the street from the Georgetown Cheer facilities, offers the young people of Sussex an alternate choice for schooling. We have a tendency to think of this school as a private school but it is PUBLIC in all respects. The addition of the Jefferson School to its' opportunities adds a grade one to twelve CHOICE for our young people. Admission is by lottery and the overwhelming response of the people of Sussex demonstrates its position in educational opportunities now available in Sussex. As a tool to help in the recruitment of additional medical personnel to our county it joins the Montessori School under construction in Seaford as a great start.

SEDAC had its regularly scheduled August meeting again by Zoom. We were pleased to welcome Delaware Secretary of Technology and Information, Jim Collins and three representatives of Sussex County Council - President Mike Vincent, County Administrator Todd Lawson and Dwayne Kilgo, Director of Information Technology. We had gathered to discuss the absence of full- service broadband in areas of Sussex County. The three issues that took up much of the discussion involved affordability, access and the announcement by Governor John Carney of the financing program of $20 million dollars that, hopefully, address the two other major issues involving broadband.

The first thing that was obvious to all was that both the state and county are working very closely to solve these problems. In a day and time when the "Delaware Way" is being criticized, these two governments - one Democrat, the other Republican - are working together for the common good. From cooperating to provide additional towers, to expanding into areas presently without service and to providing Wi-Fi on site at each of the County Libraries, these two governments are reaching out and cooperating without worrying about who gets the credit. Their common goal is "Digital Equity Across the State". Both the State and County are also working with the Delaware Electric Coop to incorporate the efforts of this utility to bring expanded broadband services to all of Sussex County.

As to the $20 million, SEDAC was able to get a commitment from Secretary Collins to spend most of those funds in rural Kent and Sussex Counties, where the need exists. Governments serving the public - go figure!

On July 31, 2020, a very short era, one that had great promise for the students of the Sussex Technical Scool district, came to an end with the resignation of Superintendent Stephen H. Guthrie. In his very short tenure at Sussex Tech, Steve turned this school around. He understood the mission of this District and began the four- year road to once again honor the rich tradition of the Vocational Technical school. He understood, and to the board's credit, was allowed to begin the process of developing technical and vocational programs that would develop job skills for the young people of Sussex County. His vision and efforts will be missed. His loss will be a difficult one to fill but we hope that the school board will find a suitable replacement and the accomplishments that have been made will continue and will grow.

Our most recent SEDAC meetings have highlighted the growing recognition that there are key components that Sussex County needs. The above efforts are great beginnings but if we are to remain a viable location for families to live here and prosper, more needs to be done to expand quality education, to make digital connectivity even more available, to create opportunities for better paying jobs and to open the door to new ideas and efforts.

Again, we hope that you all stay safe in these trying times. But, even in these times there are efforts being made to develop jobs for Sussex Countians. In our next editorial we will report on these efforts.