



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 8, 2024

FAYETTE HOSTS INAUGURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WEEK

Uniontown, PA – Fayette County’s major economic development organizations are in the middle of observing the first weeklong celebration dedicated locally to their achievements.

Last month, the Fayette County Board of Commissioners declared May 6 to 10, 2024, Economic Development Week in Fayette County, in conjunction with the national celebration of the same name, which seeks to highlight the programs, best practices and exceptional individuals paving the way for local economic development.

The Fayette County Office of Economic Development, Fayette County Redevelopment Authority, Fay-Penn Economic Development Council and Fayette Chamber of Commerce were honored for working together and through public-private partnerships to positively impact our communities’ vitality for generations to come.

Fayette County Economic Development Director Mark Rafail said Economic Development Week is about celebrating “how far the county’s come” and how the aforementioned entities’ “strong partnerships” will continue “crafting our future.”

“I enjoy collaborating with the entire team, but my favorite part is when we have the chance to work with our private developers who are investing money in our county because they believe in its potential for continued growth,” Rafail said. “When citizens want to help support economic development throughout Fayette County, you know you’re doing something right.”

The first Economic Development Week kicked off with a ceremony outside the Fayette County Courthouse Monday, where local, state and federal legislators once again honored local economic development professionals.

Tuesday’s event included an economic development panel featuring commissioners Scott Dunn, chairman; Vince Vicites and Dave Lohr; Fay-Penn Executive Director Laura Kuhns; and guest speaker Stephen McKnight.

Commissioner Vicites said economic development is “personally (his) number one focus as a county commissioner.”

“Job creation and retention are the focus of my economic development efforts. The commissioners have worked very closely with our lead economic development agencies to create and retain thousands and thousands of jobs over the past couple of decades,” Vicites said. “Long-term growth is also important to

our economic development efforts. Site-ready business parks are readily available throughout the county. Creation of spec buildings to enhance economic development and the wider picture of workforce development are important factors when maximizing our efforts with economic development.”

Commissioner Dunn said Fayette’s location within 500 miles of more than half the U.S. and Canadian populations - including 140 million Americans stretching from Chicago, Ill., to Atlanta, Ga., and the entire Eastern Seaboard, means the county is “uniquely situated in many aspects” and poised for economic growth.

“Over 2.3 million people live within a 75-mile radius of us. There are available lots in our business parks, raw land and brownfields ready for rehabilitation. Our transportation assets include a robust, four-lane highway system leading to interstates in all directions. Transportation is further enhanced by rail, river barge and small-air travel,” Dunn said. “An emphasis has been placed on improving our infrastructure, including water, sewage, power and high-speed, fiber-optic broadband. In some zones, Fayette is able to provide tax incentives to be competitive with neighboring areas and states.”

Dunn said all those assets - and much more - have helped county leadership develop a strategy to “create a diverse economy” that isn’t “reliant on a single industry.”

“To that end, we have identified five focus industries: agriculture, healthcare, manufacturing, energy and tourism. Work to improve these industries is ongoing,” Dunn said. “We have further identified two industries that will support these efforts - education and training will help build the needed workforce; and new housing will be needed to create the communities that our residents can thrive in,” Dunn said. “It’s important to note that none of these industries are in silos, and each can help enhance the others. A great example of this is our tourism.”

Commissioner Lohr said he’s “always thinking about” what initially attracts people to Fayette County and “what we need to offer so they’ll stay.”

“Economic development is a vital part of that equation. We can either be forward-thinking and look to grow Fayette County, or we can stagnate. Strategic economic development and the jobs it brings are essential to the health and prosperity of the county, and that’s to everyone’s benefit,” Lohr said. “All too often, government has gotten in the way of moving the county forward. My focus is on getting government out of the way, streamlining required government processes wherever possible, to facilitate development in the county. I’m in regular communication with companies seeking to build or relocate, and I’m building bridges between developers, utility companies, municipalities and others to get projects up and running.”

The Economic Development Week festivities continue Thursday with an open house at the Launchbox; followed by a Friday presentation in Georges Township; and more.

To learn more about Fayette County’s major economic development organizations, visit their websites: www.faypenn.org; www.fayettecountypa.org/837/Economic-Development; www.racfpa.org; and www.fayettechamber.com.

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.fayettecountypa.org.

###

This communication is part of the Fayette County PR Initiative, which is funded through the Fayette County Local Share Account (LSA) and Hotel Tax Grants in cooperation with the Fayette County Board of Commissioners, Fayette Chamber of Commerce, The Redevelopment Authority of the County of Fayette, The Redstone Foundation and other partners. This funding has been designated for the continued promotion and marketing of Fayette County, PA.

For more information, contact Kristi Kassimer Harper, Public Relations Specialist, at 724-437-4571, kkassimer@fayettecountypa.info or Kaylie Glaze, Community Relations Coordinator, at 724-430-1200 Ext. 1611, kmoore@fayettepa.org.