



June 25, 2009

Del Pointe development will bring jobs to Sussex County

By Joe Booth

The recent interest and actions regarding the Del Pointe economic development project have prompted me to clarify my position on the issue.

While much of the debate over Del Pointe centers on the racino aspect of the proposal, the project will also include a hotel and convention center, a family resort hotel, an indoor water park, an indoor sports complex, a movie theater, five restaurants, 350,000 square feet of retail space and 50,000 square feet of office space -- all of which will provide non-gaming jobs and revenue.

Del Pointe has already been approved to build and run a one-mile harness racing track and I do not see why they should be treated any differently than the state's three other horse racing facilities. To that end, I'm co-sponsoring House Bill 194, which would allow Del Pointe to operate slot machines. This is a fair approach that gives the Sussex County track the same authorization already extended to Harrington Raceway, Dover Downs and Delaware Park.

For the last 15 years, all Delawareans have enjoyed the huge tax benefits associated with the state's three existing racinos. However, the residents of New Castle and Kent counties have received the lion's share of the jobs associated with these venues. I believe it's time Sussex Countians were treated equally and provided with the same employment opportunities as their fellow citizens.

Building Del Pointe will create 6,000 construction jobs. Two-thousand people will be employed in permanent jobs once the facility opens. Additionally, one study indicates another 2,000 jobs will be generated elsewhere in the county as a result of Del Pointe's operations. If this project delivers on even half of this promise, it would have a huge impact on Sussex County's economy and the well-being of thousands of local families.

Additionally, aside from the money this project would pump into the state's coffers, it would generate an estimated \$900,000 for the Indian River School District and \$2 million for the Town of Millsboro annually.

Opponents of this plan, some of whom I count among my friends, denounce the immortality of gambling. While I don't disagree with their views, I would counter that I have an ethical obligation, especially in the current recession, to help facilitate the means by which many hard-working Sussex Countians could provide for their families.

I am not a proponent of gambling, but rather an advocate for the people of the 37th Representatives District.

In these bad economic times, I will not turn a blind eye to a rational plan that could save many local families from a grim economic fate.

Joe Booth, R-Georgetown, is a state representative