

OBSERVER CORPS REPORT

July County Council Meetings - Highlights

Impact of General Assembly Legislation on Sussex County

Several bills passed by the Delaware General Assembly will have a direct impact on Sussex County government, including House Bill 2, the Marijuana Control Act. While the law allows municipal governments to prohibit marijuana operations within city and town limits, the same option is not afforded to county government in unincorporated areas. The result, as explained by Todd Lawson, the Council Administrator, at the July 11th Council meeting is that the county cannot enact an ordinance that conflicts with any state regulations governing the time, place, manner, and number of operations, including shops and cultivation operations.

Other passed bills impacting Sussex County are: SB 120, which expands the use of realty transfer taxes to be used for workforce and affordable housing programs; HB 62 which requires the county to reassess property at its fair market value at least once every five years; (a process that is underway) and, SB 186 which gives council the ability to establish an ordinance for voluntary school assessment per unit in major subdivisions based on the impact a development would have on the school district.

State funding.

Grants-in-Aid and Bond Bill funding for the county includes: \$1 million to reimburse the cost for paramedics; \$300,000 for a fire study to better determine fire departments' finances; \$200,000 for the Sussex kitchen incubator program; \$4 million to the Bay Beach Initiative for beach restoration; \$1 million for Seaford economic development at the Western Sussex Business Campus; \$4 million for a new Troop 4 near Georgetown; and \$2.5 million for Fort Miles Museum in Cape Henlopen State Park.

Pending General Assembly bills being monitored.

The County is monitoring HB 246, which would require the county to establish expanded riparian buffer along tidal waterways, marshes and non tidal freshwater bodies, lakes, ponds, and some streams; HB 248 which would require any applicant doing a project in an underserved community, or within three miles of one, to complete certain community outreach activities. HB 246 is in the housing committee, while HB 248 is in the natural resources and energy committee.

Proposed Changes to County Code.

Councilperson Mark Schaeffer (R, 3rd) has proposed three changes to the county code relating to subdivisions: reduced construction hours for Saturday and no work on Sunday; duplicative amenities for subdivision split by state roads; and silt-fence rules that would require the fences to be installed of the perimeter buffer zone.