BUSINESS BRIEFS

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Infrastructure Improvements Planned in Berwick, Columbia County

The current sewer system serving the Berwick Industrial Development Association (BIDA) complex was constructed throughout the early to mid 1900's. The system conveys both sewage and stormwater; piping is comprised of various materials, some of which are unsafe. Nearly 20 businesses are located in the 155-acre complex, employing approximately 1,250 people.

Flow from the BIDA complex is treated at the Berwick Area Joint Sewer Authority's (BAJSA) facility and, under the BIDA system's current design, especially during high precipitation, it is creating significant problems for the treatment facility, causing overflows into the Susquehanna River, and directly discharging pollutants, including untreated waste and industrial byproducts.

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has placed BAJSA and the Borough of Berwick under a consent order requiring the Sewer Authority to separate stormwater and sanitary sewer systems. On a community-wide basis, the cost will be between $18 million and $21 million dollars, and efforts are underway to identify and secure needed funds.

Within its industrial complex, BIDA and the Authority have made the separation of stormwater and sanitary sewage systems a priority. The estimated cost is $4.8 million and, on behalf of BIDA, SEDA-COG has secured a grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) for $2 million.

Separation of the combined system will help mitigate the sewer rates charged to industrial and commercial tenants within the BIDA complex and will increase the capacity of sanitary sewage permitted to be discharged from the complex. That potential for increased capacity will greatly assist BIDA in marketing the complex, as will the elimination of potential litigation due to industrial overflows. Most importantly, upgrading the system will assist in retaining 1,250 employees, and three companies within the complex expect to create a total of 240 new jobs once the project is completed. Furthermore, upon the project's completion, five companies anticipate investing a total of $1.9 million in capital improvements.

Construction is expected to begin later this year. In addition to EDA, the project would be funded through the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, DEP, BAJSA, and the Borough of Berwick.

Sunbury City Steering Committee Ready to Get Started

As they begin working on a comprehensive plan for Sunbury, members of a newly-formed steering committee are using words like "vision," "renaissance," and "pride." Development of the plan, an 18-month process, is being coordinated through the SEDA-COG Community Resource Center. *Coming Together - Sunbury's Plan for the New City* is intended to help restore the City to the social and economic prominence it once enjoyed.

Former City Councilman John Shipman, a member of the Committee, spoke of the need for long-range vision, a plan to guide the City for the next ten years. He said, "We intend to produce a tool that can help the Mayor and City Council, a tool that can lead to a renaissance in our city."

In addition to Shipman and Mayor David Persing, members of the steering committee include:

- Jim Eister, City Councilman,
- Stewart Graybill, City Administrator,
- Brianne Jenkins, high school student,
- Bob Lagerman, retired teacher,
- Stephen Mazzeo, Chief of Police,
- Hank Truslow, retired CEO, Sunbury Textile Mills
- Ryan Unger, member, Sunbury Housing Authority, and
- Janet Yonkoskie, President, Sunbury Revitalization, Inc.

City officials expect to hear from several other Sunbury-area residents who have been asked to serve on the committee.

Speaking of the need for a comprehensive plan in Sunbury, Lagerman said, "We need to know what to expect and where we're going." He believes the greatest challenge facing the committee is to instill pride among the City's residents. "I don't have the answer," he said, "but I'm not going to give up trying."

In addition to community revitalization, economic development aspects of the plan will result in data needed for business and industrial development, job creation, and the re-use of commercial and industrial property in Sunbury. SEDA-COG will work closely with the Greater Susquehanna Valley Chamber of Commerce on the plan's economic development component.

Saying he sees "...tremendous potential..." in Sunbury, the Chamber's President and CEO, Charles Ross, outlined the process. "The first step is an inventory of the City's physical features — the good and the bad. That will be followed by workshops, bringing people together to discuss Sunbury's assets and deficiencies. "

"It's a matter of building on the positive, replacing or repairing the negative, decide what's missing and go after it," said Ross.

Development of the comprehensive plan will also involve Thomas Comitta Associates, Inc., a town planning and landscape architecture firm, based in West Chester, PA. The 29-year old firm works with client communities — of all sizes — in Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland. Its projects include the Fort Hunter Park master plan, just north of Harrisburg.

Sunbury's comprehensive plan will address the City's full range of needs, issues, and opportunities, but SEDA-COG's approach is intended to go beyond production of a document. "The underlying aim of this effort is to propose actions of strategic importance to the City," said Tom Grbenick, Chief of SEDA-COG's Community Resource Center, "actions that will create the climate needed to reestablish

Sunbury's standing as a center for economic activity and employment in the Central Susquehanna Valley."

Shipman concurs with that approach. "The plan must be beneficial and doable," he said, "it must be something the City can accomplish."

Energy Management Summit to be held May 19

Building on the success of its monthly breakfast seminar series, "Building Green" and "Energizing Our Region", SEDA-COG's Energy Resource Center is bringing best practices in energy management basics and forward-thinking strategic management together in a day-long conference at Bucknell University on May 19. Thanks to a grant from the Central Pennsylvania Workforce Development Corporations's (CPWDC) Advanced Manufacturers Industry Partnership, the registration fee for all attendees located within SEDA-COG and CPWDC's 11-county region is only $75. The registration fee for attendees outside of the region is $125.

Register now for this conference, designed for decision makers and operational managers in manufacturing and commercial businesses, municipalities and authorities, the construction trades, financial institutions, realtors and developers, schools and hospitals to increase their knowledge of ways to manage and expand their bottom-lines both today and tomorrow as the energy economy matures. Click here for a preliminary conference agenda.

"Several organizations have come together to plan this conference," noted Energy Resource Center Director Stacy Richards, "which offers an unprecedented opportunity for public and private sector leaders to identify and take the next important steps to turn cost centers into profit centers, stop the erosion of bottom lines being caused by high energy costs, and create new wealth and jobs in our region by capturing, using and owning the energy in our waste streams and operations and the abundant renewable energy and workforce resources in our region."

This conference is sponsored by the CPWDC Advanced Manufacturing Industry Partnership, SEDA-COG's Energy Resource Center, IMC, Keystone Energy Technology Enterprise Center (KETEC), and the Central Susquehanna Builder's Association. For additional information, contact Katie Ruiz, Energy Resource Center at kruiz@seda-cog.org or (570) 524-4491.

Municipal Website Development and On-Line Payment Processing

SEDA-Council of Governments Information Technologies Group (ITG) is in the final stages of moving almost 80 municipal and non-profit websites to a new SharePoint based website hosting system. ITG is providing individual training to all of the website administrators for these websites.

The new SharePoint system makes it easier for website administrators with less technical experience to create and update web pages and upload and share documents with their website visitors. SharePoint has been Microsoft's primary business collaboration portal, and is increasingly being used as a website creation and management system.

The choice of SharePoint is the result of a year and a half long collaborative project between SEDA-COG and the County Commissioners Association of PA (CCAP) to review and select a replacement for the Pennsylvania Dynamic Site Framework (PA-DSF), the website

content management system used for many years by SEDA-COG, CCAP and most PA State offices.

On-Line Payment Processing: SEDA-COG ITG is also looking for counties, municipalities, municipal authorities, or other public entities interested in accepting donations, payments for goods and services, or event registrations on-line through their websites. The SEDA-COG ITG ePAy system makes it easy to build payment forms that can be embedded within an existing web page to process on-line payments using one of several proven payment gateway systems, such as PayPal, Authorize.net and Government Payment Processing. Processing fees can be passed on to the payer in the form of a Handling Fee so that there is no cost to the agency.

If a municipality or public service non-profit is interested in finding out how they can start accepting on-line payments, is in need of a new website or would like to change their website hosting to a system their own staff can control, contact William Flather at 570-524-4491 or by email at wflather@seda-cog.org.

SEDA-COG's Information Technologies Group works with counties, municipalities, nonprofit organizations and small businesses to offer other IT services. For more information about ITG's other services, contact Jim Baker at jbaker@seda-cog.org or by phone at 570-524-4491.

Websites/Web Applications: Custom Site Design, E-Commerce, Content Management, and Custom Web Applications/Databases. Tech Support Hotline: For computer problems municipalities can call the Tech Support Hotline at 570- 522-7279. In most cases the first half hour is covered by a state grant.

On Site Technical Support: For a fee, we diagnose computer problems on-site and repair the machines. We can also help design and install or renovate a computer network.

Purchasing Assistance: SEDA-COG can help select, configure and purchase machines and peripherals. Our corporate arrangements with major vendors insure quick support on warranty issues.

Annual Average Unemployment Rate