

Kelley, Girdler say good things in store for 2018

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It's traditional at the start of a new year to predict what will happen in the coming months. So it is with local officials, with both Pulaski Judge-Executive Steve Kelley and Somerset Mayor Eddie Girdler predicting rosy outlooks for 2018.

The main goals focus on economics, with both Girdler and Kelley talking county-wide growth and the implementation of SPEDA — The Somerset Pulaski Economic Development Authority.

"My priority this year is to work closely with Mayor Girdler to guide the transition of SPEDA," Kelley said. "This will enable us to harness everyone's development efforts together, to pull in a common direction, giving Pulaski County unprecedented and managed growth."

For his part, Girdler said he plans to meet with Kelley next week to discuss the economic body. Government officials already have had several meetings which have included the current leadership of the Somerset Pulaski County Development Foundation, the group which SPEDA will be replacing. Girdler expected the new SPEDA organization to be created within the next 90 days, although the transition from one entity to another will take several years.

"There will be a very smooth transition," Girdler said. "We have a transition plan already in place."

Kelley said he is excited about what the future holds for the community, particularly when it comes to economic development.

In addition to busy local developers and home builders, Kelley said the Chamber of Commerce is actively recruiting retail/restaurant ventures to complement several commercial projects in the works.

Judge Kelley also projected announcements by the end of January or February regarding two industrial projects for which officials have worked over a year. He said the companies "have selected us, but are waiting on state incentives to be announced.

"We are planning to expand our industrial property significantly to prepare for other ventures who are interested in locating here," Judge Kelley continued.

Although neither Kelley nor Girdler could give specifics on those ventures, Girdler said he knew of three major industries looking at the area.

Those companies not only need location sites but also employees, and Judge Kelley pointed to the local Area Technology Center and schools which, he said, are "making huge strides in workforce development."

Judge Kelley sees all these efforts coming together under the newly-formed SPEDA.

While looking ahead to 2018, Girdler called 2017 a fantastic year for development and growth, saying he was proud of what has been accomplished so far.

He predicted 2018 "is going to be a banner year."

Girdler added that 2017 had extreme growth in local retail and the number of building permits given out. "I think 2018 will surpass that.

When it comes to county services, several improvements are in the works. According to Kelley, the road department is currently working on two major road reconstructions and plan to invest in more and better mowing equipment to keep right of ways cleaner.

At the courthouse, renovations are continuing to help the County Clerk's Office and the Sheriff's Office.

"We are utilizing a homeland security grant to improve safety at the courthouse," Judge Kelley added, "so our employees and citizens can conduct business safely and efficiently."

At the 911 Center, officials are working to upgrade CAD (computer-aided dispatch) software. The judge added that continuous improvements are being made at the county's parks to better serve citizens.

"We have an exciting 2018 planned!," Judge Kelley said. "We are working hard to make Pulaski County a better place for you and your family."

As far as city plans, Girdler put forth several ideas, some of which were ongoing plans he expects to finished up in the New Year, and some which are brand-new goals.

In the on-going side of things, Girdler said he planned for the issue of the old SomerFit facility to be resolved. The facility has been a thorn in the city's side ever since a mandate from the state shut down the indoor pools in September 2016.

After months of considering different options on how to make repairs to the facility's pool chemical tanks, roof and HVAC system, the decision was made in August to look at handing the building over to the Somerset Independent School System.

In their December meeting, Somerset Independent's board members approved the BG1 of the purchase of the SomerFit facility, pending approval from the Kentucky Department of Education.

Mayor Girdler said he looks forward to working with the school district to get SomerFit up and running again within 2018.

Girdler said also he was looking forward to the owners of the former General Electric plant handing over its ball fields to the city. GE officials have announced their intention of donating the beloved community softball fields to Somerset, and Girdler said plans were in place for improvements and expansion.

Girdler also announced that a feasibility study is being conducted looking at "a possible expanded aquatic center," with the study to be presented to the City Council later, and details to be announce afterwards.

He said several locations were being looked at for the creation of this center, with SomerSplash park being just one of them.

"Our community is going to be blessed and pleased with what we will achieve in 2018," Girdler said.

http://www.somerset-kentucky.com/news/kelley-girdler-say-good-things-in-store-for/article_aec2e26a-edba-11e7-a6ac-4b698026aa8f.html