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## Business park gets federal funding boost

By Paul Sunyak , Herald-Standard

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**U.S. Rep. John Murtha (D-Johnstown) announced his procurement of more than \$1 million to further develop the Fayette County Business Park in an on-site press conference Saturday.**



U.S. Rep. John Murtha addresses a crowd Saturday at the Fayette County Business Park in South Union Township. Murtha held a press conference to announce his procurement of more than \$1 million to further develop the business park. Paul Ruhter/Herald

Murtha also went out of his way to credit the "relentless" efforts of Fayette County Commissioner Sean M. Cavanagh in the process and confirmed that he's backing only Cavanagh in the upcoming Democratic primary, largely because of that passion.

"He convinced me that this project was one of the most important in Fayette County," said Murtha, who added that Cavanagh and South Union Township Supervisor Bob Schiffbauer were "tireless" in their efforts to convince him of the project's importance.

With the future site of a new CareerLink building serving as a backdrop, Murtha revealed that he's procured \$400,000 for access improvements at the Route 40 site from the federal Omnibus Transportation Bill signed into law earlier this year.

Murtha also announced that \$620,500 in Appalachian Regional Commission money is coming the park's way: \$200,000 to extend Wayland Smith Drive in the center of the 270-acre park, \$200,500 approved last year for general infrastructure and a 2003 award of \$220,000 for that same purpose.

"I'm delighted to announce \$1 million from the federal government," said Murtha. "I've been impressed by what you've done ... your vision. My success has come from the fact that I work with the local officials. I go to (them) and they tell me what's important."

Murtha said that with federal resources becoming increasingly scarce, even for a U.S. House member of his stature and seniority, the critical litmus test for him is the projected effectiveness of any economic development project.

The eighth-most senior member in the House of Representatives said the plan for developing the business park, along with Cavanagh's insistent lobbying, caused him to "reprogram" some money slated for elsewhere in his sprawling district.

"I felt that this could be as big as any project that I've been involved with," said Murtha. "This can be big ... with retail (development). If you get the Home Depot (across New Salem Road), let me tell you, this whole area will change."

Although Fayette County Commissioner Ronald M. Nehls was among the assembled dignitaries at the half-hour affair, Murtha made clear during and afterward that he's throwing his weight behind Cavanagh.

"Sean worked like hell for me (last year). Sean was one of my most important supporters," said Murtha. "I'm impressed with the way he works. He pesters the heck out of me, but I like that. I'll do everything I can to help him."

While acknowledging that Commissioner Vincent A. Vicites came to see him last week regarding the business park, Murtha said only, "I listened to him."

Murtha also clarified that he's not in any political bind by exclusively backing Cavanagh, even though former state Sen. J. William Lincoln has entered the race with support from county Democratic Party Chairman Fred. L. Lebder.

"I'm for Sean. That's no predicament for me," said Murtha. "The guy that did the most work for me was Sean, so we'll see how it (the election) goes."

Vicites, who did not attend the press conference because of a Democratic State Committee meeting in Harrisburg, later said he stressed to Murtha the need to get federal funds to supplement the park's development. "I want to thank the congressman for his help. I think it's great that he's supporting this park, which will create hundreds of jobs in the future," said Vicites.

Nehls, who spoke briefly during the event, credited teamwork for the park's development and lavished praise on Murtha.

"We're so lucky to have someone like Congressman Murtha in Washington, D.C.," said Nehls. "This county is set to explode, and one of the main reasons is Congressman Murtha."

Cavanagh said that in stark contrast to the past, Fayette County is a "happening place" and that Murtha has helped tremendously in that transition, playing a major role in landing companies like Advanced Acoustic Concepts, Sensitech and United Defense.

"Congressman Murtha is an expert in getting water and sewage and transportation funds," said Cavanagh. "This is the epicenter, the hottest real estate project in Fayette County ... Fayette County's on the move. We're making it happen. This is going to be bigger than Southpointe (in Washington County)."

Cavanagh also credited Schiffbauer and fellow South Union Township Supervisor Tom Frankhouser, county transportation consultant Bill Piper, PennDOT officials and Fayette County Redevelopment Authority Executive Director Raymond C. Polaski with helping move the project forward.

Chuck Thompson, representing PennDOT, said the state transportation department remains committed to design and construction projects on Routes 40 and 21 that will aid development in the park and surrounding areas.

"I think we've just begun the odyssey, really," said Thompson.

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