

Base reuse effort rolls along

2012-02-03 / Commentary Times Record



BY STEVE LEVESQUE

There are a number of very exciting things happening at Brunswick Landing. Since the closing of the base last May, the Midcoast Regional Redevelopment Authority (MRRRA) has been very active in promoting the property's redevelopment and demonstrating that we are indeed open for business.

MRRRA is planning to host and organize several major events over the course of this year, which will attract thousands of people to this region and benefit our local businesses.

We will host the second annual "Race the Runways" event on April 7 at Brunswick Landing. Organized by the MidCoast Triathlon Club and Maine Track Club, this race features 1 mile, 5 kilometer and half- marathon races.

Last year's event attracted more than 1,000 participants, volunteers and spectators.

"Maine's Boating Expo" will come to Brunswick Landing from April 13 to April 15.

The Expo will be produced by the Maine Marine Trades Association in response to the statewide membership's need for a venue to showcase their late-model boats, equipment, electronics and gear immediately before the start of the boating season.

We are organizing the second annual Brunswick International Fly-in on June 2 and 3, which is free and open to the public.

This year's two-day event features the Business Aviation Expo, pilot safety seminars, overnight camping and evening entertainment. Last year's event attracted more than 300 aircraft and hundreds of public participants.

We are organizing the 2012 Great State of Maine Air Show on Aug. 24, 25, 26, featuring the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds and other spectacular flying demonstrations. Honoring those who serve, the Great State of Maine Air Show is a popular Maine tradition.

We are working on several other exciting events, which will result in significant new business opportunities for our area businesses.

On the business development front, we currently have 17 entities providing 120 plus jobs here at Brunswick Landing, with a promise of 450 jobs within the next two years.

We are working with a number of other very exciting prospects that promise additional goodpaying jobs for Brunswick Landing and Topsham Commerce Park. We'll keep you posted as these materialize.

We are particularly excited about the new 79,000-square-foot, \$14.3 million facility that we are constructing for Mölnlycke Health Care, a Swedish medical device company. This world class facility, which is being constructed using green building principles, will be a state-of-the-art, high-tech manufacturing center that will produce various wound care products for the company and employ upwards of 100 people. The planned occupancy date will be February 2013.

We are actively marketing buildings and land for sale or lease at Brunswick Landing and Topsham Commerce Park at market rates, as we receive them from the Navy. Accordingly, as you drive around the properties, you will soon see

“For Sale” or “For Lease” signs on the properties we are marketing. You can also visit our website at www.mrra.us to view available buildings.

The new Midcoast Campus of the Southern Maine Community College (SMCC) is up and running at Brunswick Landing, with a flexible curriculum designed specifically for the workforce needs of businesses in our region.

The partnership between Southern Maine Community College (SMCC) and the University of Maine to form the Maine Advanced Technology Engineering Center (MATEC) will also be a significant element to supporting the regional workforce needs. What an exciting and important asset this new campus is for the people and businesses in this area and in our collective ability to both retain and attract businesses to this region.

There has been quite a bit of press lately about the Kestrel project. While we are certainly disappointed that we were unable to secure the full aircraft manufacturing component, Kestrel is still very committed to growing their business in Maine.

What we did get is a significant portion of the company’s activities where a number of research and development, and composite activities will be conducted in Brunswick, and the aircraft will be finished here as well. These activities will create approximately 100 direct jobs, with the opportunity to grow other business sectors here as well.

I would like to point out that the individuals and businesses that will be purchasing these aircraft will be traveling to Brunswick to customize their individual planes, pick up their aircraft and conduct their flight training here.

This means that these people will be experiencing our special Mid-coast community — staying in local hotels, eating at local restaurants and shopping at local stores.

Upon visiting this wonderful area, many of them may find out what we already know: that the Mid-coast region is a fantastic place to live and do business.

As we continue to redevelop the former base, we are certainly going to face our challenges. And just like the rest of the economy, we will have our ups and downs, and not every deal will happen exactly as planned.

However, what’s most important is that we need to maintain a positive attitude and continue to work together to achieve the future we envisioned.

Attitude is everything in the business world, and people who make business decisions are watching us very closely.

We have a fabulous product to sell in this region of Maine. If we project a positive attitude about our state, our community and our businesses, these people will notice.

Please visit our website at www.mrra.us for updates on future events and announcements and contact us with any questions.

STEVE LEVESQUE *is executive director of the Midcoast Regional Redevelopment Authority.*

letters@timesrecord.com