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Parkowski hired to lead Kent Economic Partnership

Jun 19th, 2018 · by Craig Anderson · Comments: 2

The Kent Economic Partnership announced Linda Parkowski's hire Tuesday after approval at its board meeting. KEP Chairman Gregg Moore said she was "by far" the most qualified of 12 applicants for the position, six who were interviewed. Her start date is June 29. (Delaware State News photo/Marc Clery)

DOVER — She's passionate about her home Kent County and ready for a lead role in plotting its business-related future.

Linda Parkowski, newly hired executive director of the Kent Economic Partnership, wants to study data and meet with local leaders and organizations with similar

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interests to determine the best path forward,

“I would like to see Kent County be a viable location for businesses to expand and re-locate to,” Ms. Parkowski said.

“We have all the ingredients – great school systems, location, land, areas to expand. I want to take a look at what our work force can supply, look at the Rockport study and meet with the (KEP Board), municipalities, other stakeholders and other economic boards to get a better understanding of how that can all work together to benefit all of us here in Kent County.”

The KEP announced Mrs. Parkowski’s hire Tuesday after approval at its board meeting. KEP Chairman Gregg Moore said she was “by far” the most qualified of 12 applicants for the position, six who were interviewed. Her start date is June 29.

“I am honored to be hired to lead the KEP and ready to be a spark for the great change that will take Kent County’s economy to the next level,” Mrs. Parkowski said.

“Having lived, worked and raised a family right here, this is an opportunity for me to give back to the area I love and call home.”

The hire followed a reorganization by the KEP, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit previously directed by Kent County Levy Court employee Jim Waddington. The county defunded the director’s position, Mr. Moore said, but remains a strong factor in determining the KEP future direction.

“Linda has a proven ability to lead and the knowledge and experience necessary to take on this important role,” Mr. Moore said.

“The Kent Economic Partnership’s work is just beginning as we position the county for future growth. Linda understands the needs of this region and its businesses from her time at the Division of Small Business and, before that, at the Delaware Economic Development Office and the Delaware Tourism Office.”

On Tuesday, Mr. Waddington said via email “I have enjoyed my 6-1/2 year tenure with the KEP and wish them success with this transition.”

The KEP re-established board added two members from the Greater Kent Committee, which contributed $100,000 to the budget. Moving forward, Mr. Moore said “our goal is to double or more than double the budget and resources available.”

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The towns of Smyrna, Dover and Milford all had representatives on the interview committee for the new executive director, and Mr. Moore said municipal support was vital to the organization's future success.

Mrs. Parkowski transformed the Delaware Tourism Office from a small operation to a "well-oiled machine," according to Mr. Moore, which fit into the KEP's search for a self-motivated executive director. Her already-established local and statewide relationships will open communication immediately, he said.

"With DEDO and the Delaware Tourism Office (Mrs.) Parkowski helped lead the state's efforts to create an ecosystem in which local businesses have been able to grow and thrive," a KEP news release stated Tuesday.

"Prior to her time in state government, she managed successful businesses, including the Sheraton Dover Hotel and Wild Quail Golf and Country Club."

Improved employment numbers, better retention of current businesses and more relocation of others is what the KEP is striving for, according to Mr. Moore.

Mrs. Parkowski suggested checking back in six months when asked about specific plans to create an expanded, more thriving business climate in Delaware's middle county.

"I'm not going to make assumptions without studying the data and gathering more information," she said.

In announcing the hire, the KEP described itself as "a non-profit organization to help support and expand business interests throughout central Delaware.

"The Partnership is supported by a dynamic team of business leaders from all over Kent County, whose mission is to create a business environment supportive of the entrepreneurial spirit – benefiting businesses and residents alike."

Reach staff writer Craig Anderson at canderson@newszap.com

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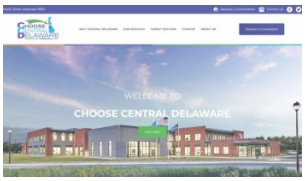

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