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Baker lauds SouthField progress in visit with Hedlund; Kay praises governor

The SouthField community under construction at the former South Weymouth Naval Air Station is getting high fives from Gov. Charlie Baker for its economic potential and accessibility by public transportation.



St. Francis Xavier School grade 3 student Sean Happel welcomes Gov. Charlie Baker to Weymouth on Oct. 13. Wicked Local photo/Tom Gorman

The SouthField community under construction at the former South Weymouth Naval Air Station is getting high fives from Republican Gov. Charlie Baker for its economic potential and accessibility by public transportation.

“I think a lot of work has been done here,” Baker said while touring SouthField with state Sen. Robert Hedlund (R-Weymouth), who is running against Mayor Susan Kay for Weymouth's top job. “My secretary of transportation and secretary of economic development has been involved with this project. There is clearly enormous potential and opportunity here.”

Baker said the site’s accessibility from Route 3, Route 18 and the MBTA’s South Weymouth commuter rail station make it ideal for commercial and residential development.

“I have heard it said that to get in and out of Boston from the South Shore you have to have a plan,” Baker said. “That is putting it politely.”

SouthField developer L Star Management is proposing to have upwards of 3 million square feet of commercial amenities and thousands of additional homes in a plan that includes town houses, apartments, and single family homes.

LStar is proposing to have these amenities under some proposed zoning changes that are being reviewed by Weymouth Town Council.

LStar managing partner Kyle Corkum said completion of the Bill Delahunt Parkway to Trotter Road would give people access to SouthField and Route 18.

“People will be able to go to the T station and Route 18,” Corkum said while highlighting the project to Baker. “We have worked closely with the town council to revise this plan. We will have almost 4,000 homes. We have 135 acres dedicated to office firms and we should generate 10,000 jobs alone that will be in walking distance to the T.”

Corkum said LStar has a way of taking over previously unsuccessful projects and making them thrive.

The extension of the parkway to Trotter Road could get underway next spring according to MassDOT project manager Gautum Sen.

Sen said during an Oct. 7 public hearing a design for the project is 25 percent complete and the sketch should be done by December.

The parkway extension is expected to cost \$6.5 million and Mass DOT will finance the expense, according to Sen.

The site plan includes a 10,000-seat stadium to accommodate soccer, lacrosse or amateur football leagues.

Baker said he heard the New England Revolution is interested in finding a new venue to play soccer games in the Boston area.

“The stadium would be a good place for a soccer, lacrosse or amateur sports,” Corkum added.

Weymouth councilors would have to approve a zoning change to accommodate the stadium.

Corkum said there has been interest by several professional soccer and lacrosse teams with having a venue in the Boston area to play in.

Hedlund jokingly said the stadium could host his softball team.

“My softball team is looking for a new lighted facility,” Hedlund said.

Baker said LStar’s site plan resembles Legacy Place, an outdoor dining and shopping center with over 75 stores and entertainment venues, located off Route 1.

Corkum said SouthField's site plan would make it a destination for people to visit on the South Shore.

"We have 500 acres of developable land and great zoning that is encompassing this place," Corkum said.

Hedlund said SouthField would need a workable water and sewer service plan for the planned amenities to be built.

Corkum said LStar's plan is to hook up with the Massachusetts Water Resource Authority to handle its water and sewer needs.

The plan recently got the blessing of the MWRA's advisory board two weeks ago.

Corkum said a lot of towns are struggling to have enough water and LStar wants to work on a regional water plan to benefit the area.

Hedlund said Baker's visit to SouthField was important because he saw the importance of completing the parkway and a need for a permanent water-sewer service plan.

"We will be looking for state help in dealing with a water and sewer plan," Hedlund said.

District 6 Councilor Michael Smart said Baker's visit to SouthField was important because he could see how vital the site is for economic development.

"It was great he could come down here to see what is happening in SouthField," Smart said.

"There is a lot of opportunity for regional economic growth here and that is why it is important to have a successful project here."

Corkum said Baker's visit is a vote of confidence in the redevelopment of SouthField.

"He is paying attention to what is going on here, and that he would come here shows he is taking time to learn about this project," Corkum said.

Kay responds to governor's visit

The News reached out to Kay Tuesday in the wake of Baker's visit to discuss progress at SouthField and Hedlund's statements regarding his relationship with Baker, which the state senator said would be a "big asset" for Weymouth.

Kay took the opportunity to praise Baker's leadership.

"Governor Baker has established a bipartisan relationship with a Democratic legislature," the mayor said. "Therefore, I think the governor would work with the mayor of Weymouth for the greater good of the town and the commonwealth, regardless of who the mayor is and what political party they happen to be."

"(Baker) proved that during the great winter storm," Kay said. "I worked very closely with the governor's office for the safety of the town."

Kay, a Democrat, said she had "no issue" with the governor's visit.

"The governor's visit came down to understandable interest in SouthField and a Republican supporting another Republican," she said.

Kay said the governor "was correct" that SouthField's rise is a positive development but said Baker should remember how the progress began.

"It really only began when the reforms that my administration, the town council, and Majority Leader (Ron) Mariano worked on and passed into law last year," Kay said.

The mayor also spoke about what she feels still needs to be done to keep moving SouthField along the right track.

"The parkway needs to be directly connected to Route 18, and Route 18 needs to be widened," Kay said. "The town also needs to move forward with the proposed zoning amendment...water and waste water are the other most critical goals to be accomplished."

Kay said the developer is responsible for addressing a waste and water plan and LStar is "proposing solutions now."

Bradford Randall contributed to this report. Email Ed Baker at ebaker@wickedlocal.com. Follow him on Twitter @EdBakerWeymouth.