

Letter to the Editor
Jody Sweeney
5th District Commissioner
Kent County Commissioner Responds to Letter

There has been quite a bit of discussion concerning Kent County Levy Court, the State Legislature, and the DE Turf. Just when the Levy Court and State Legislature have come to an agreement on how to move forward and you think it is over with, someone else brings it back to the forefront with a lot of misinformation.

Kent County Levy Court is probably the most open government you will ever experience. No actions are taken without public comment. Nearly every issue is discussed in Committee and then with Public review. There has never been any back-room deals made for any reason, let alone one as with as much impact as the Hotel Occupancy Tax. There are no questionable or secret practices on Levy Court. You are welcome at any meeting to experience our openness for yourself.

Senator Trey Paradee is a good friend, and a good friend of Levy Court. He knows we are a separate government and would never “demand” that Levy Court do anything. After many discussions, Senator Paradee made a request that Levy Court delay any public discussion on the Hotel Tax. We have agreed to that request.

The allegation in a recent letter was that up to four Levy Court Commissioners were involved in drafting legislation that resulted in the Hotel Occupancy Tax. This could not be further from the truth. Members of the Greater Kent Committee and Kent County Regional Sports Corporation met with Kent County leadership, as well as County Administrator Mike Petit de Mange and me. There was discussion concerning a potential tax that would allow DE Turf to increase incentives to attract larger tournaments. Those in that meeting were supportive of their idea, but the details were lacking as Kent County does not have the authority to impose a new tax. We did not hear anything else until it hit the media that a new bill was introduced, which was after a senator tried to introduce it in Epilog Language first. Senate leadership decided this was not the right way to do things.

Whenever the Occupancy Tax is discussed, it is always in the worst possible iteration; that Levy Court would automatically do what other governments, except Dover, have done, which was to implement the full 3% tax. This is aggrandizing what Levy Court could do, not what they would do. In the eleven years I have been on Levy Court, we have always had our residents’ best interest at heart with every decision, and this is no different. I am confident, that had Levy Court moved forward, it would have been a minimal tax, definitely with our residents’ best interest at heart.

I have known most of those associated with the Kent County Regional Sports Corporation for more than a dozen years. I have come to know them as very trustworthy and honest people. The meeting with Levy Court in April, 2019 included a commitment from them to only use funds from any future tax revenue for tournament incentives, and I believed them. They are my friends. They are a group of people who are extremely interested in the economic growth of Kent County, and offering a great venue for the future of youth sports in Kent County, and their success is unmatched on both counts.

Two other points: First, I have shared this information on social media and with correspondence with a recent letter writer, and it continues to be ignored. Rather, people always assume the worst and wait for their assumptions to be realized.

Second, I want to thank John Paradee for his time on the Board of Trustees for DE Turf, also known as the Kent County Regional Sports Corporation. Mr. Paradee was instrumental in the pro bono legal actions taken to create the Corporation. He is a father who understands the value of organized sports for children. Because of an aggressive reporter, who does not know the Paradee family the way I do, he has chosen to step down from the board.