

Excitement growing for new Milford food bank facility

Sale of old Mattlind Way building pending

By Matt McDonald

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MILFORD — With progress building the future Milford home of the Food Bank of Delaware now quite visible to anyone who drives by, lawmakers and food bank officials took some time Monday night to give the public an update on the project and answer questions. Among the information gleaned was a hint about what will happen to the food bank's current facility on Mattlind Way.

The community discussion was hosted by Rep. Bryan Shupe, R-Milford at the Milford Public Library. He was joined by fellow Milford Republican Rep. Charles Postles and Sen. Dave Wilson, R-Lincoln, as well as a host of food bank leaders, including President and CEO Cathy Kanefsky.

"I'm very excited about this new building," Rep. Shupe told those in attendance. "It's going to serve more Delawareans."

The food bank's current facility in the city "has served us well since the early 2000s when we arrived here in Milford," said Chad Robinson, external affairs director for the organization. "But it's tired."

The \$34 million, 67,000-square-foot facility, which broke ground in September, will allow the food bank not only to serve more people, but to offer a much broader range of services, including job training programs that were previously only available in other parts of Delaware. The building should be open by the end of the year, Ms. Kanefsky said.

A piece of breaking news emerged out of a question and answer session at the end of the meeting, when a resident attending the meeting asked what would happen to the current facility once the new one opened. The Mattlind Way property will soon be sold, said Mr. Robinson, with settlement happening within a couple days. He could not name the buyer, he added, but it is "somebody ... that you all know and that will take good care of it." The food bank will be able to lease back the space for \$10 a month until the organization moves into the facility.

The building is quickly taking shape. In mid-December, the only structures that had risen above the site were the masonry of two stair wells and an elevator shaft. As of Monday, about 80% of the orange-red steel framework of the warehouse was in place, said project manager Jeff Chapin, of the Whiting-Turner Contracting Company. The metal structure of the adjoining office area will be built next.

The site is right next to several other area nonprofit organizations, including a Boys and Girls Club, the Delaware Veterans Home and the Delaware Hospice Center. That creates an opportunity for the Milford food bank facility to be a sort of hub for other nonprofits, Ms. Kanefsky said. She foresees the opportunity to host one-off versions of the organization's culinary classes for the food bank's neighbors, for example.

"We're looking at all kinds of ways to engage people," she said.

Milford resident Holly Heverly said it is "really nice" that the food bank is working with local nonprofits. "They're really trying to have a big impact on the community."

Staff writer Matt McDonald can be reached at mmcdonald@iniusa.org. Follow @MattC_McDonald on Twitter.



Steel framework at the construction site of the Food Bank of Delaware facility in Milford on Monday.

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Workers at the Food Bank of Delaware construction site in Milford on Monday. DELAWARE STATE NEWS/MATT MCDONALD