

Roaming Around Reidsville

By Angela G. Stadler

Public Information Officer

City of Reidsville

The City of Reidsville has always prided itself on looking toward the future. Like our tagline says, we like to “Live Simply. Think Big!” While COVID-19 has set us all back a bit, we know that eventually we will get past this and go back to a normal routine although our new normal may look a little different. That is why our City leaders continue to look for ways to aid in Reidsville’s economic development and provide for a better quality of life for our citizens.

Sports have always played a big role in our lives, on the local, collegiate and national level. We love to watch a variety of sports, including America’s national pastime, baseball. Reidsville has a rich history with baseball and amateur softball. The City was home to

the original Reidsville Luckies minor league baseball team from the 1930-50s and today has a strong youth travel baseball program, thanks to the current Luckies team. An exciting new partnership between the City of Reidsville and the Old North State League will be bringing collegiate baseball to Jaycee Ballpark. The Reidsville City Council at its July meeting agreed to make the necessary improvements to Field #3 at Jaycee to accommodate Old North State Summer Collegiate baseball.

“The Old North State League is thrilled that we will be expanding and bringing a new college summer league team to Reidsville,” said Mr. Reggie Allred, President of the Old North State League. “We look forward to working with the community so that they can experience the fun and excitement of college baseball in Reidsville. We are thankful to City Manager Preston Mitchell, Mayor Donecker, the Reidsville City Council and Assistant City Manager Haywood Cloud Jr. for making this happen.”

As part of the field improvements planned, Field #3 will be enlarged to collegiate size, along with additional bleachers and a new right field “Monster Wall”. The lights and fencing will be relocated outward to accommodate the larger field, and some parking lot improvements are also



planned. The approximate \$58,000 cost will be partially funded by the City's Hotel Occupancy Tax, which must go to projects that produce "heads in beds" for our local hotels and motels.

Reggie Allred was on hand at July's Council meeting to talk about the League, which currently has eight teams that play across the State between June 1-July 31. The League recruits local players and those from out of state who are either committed high school seniors or of college age. Allred said the League also likes to be involved in the local communities where their games are played and has participated in school activities, including reading programs, as a way to give back. Allred said "Look for upcoming information to find out about youth teams running on the field before games, throwing out the first pitch, sponsorships and much more!"

The City sees many benefits associated with this new endeavor, including:

Increased Economic Development Opportunity: With Collegiate League play, games will draw visitors to our City, including our hotels, motels, restaurants and more. Assistant City Manager Cloud noted that a four-team in-season tournament could draw 25 players/coaches per team with three teams spending two nights in our hotels, taking up about 75 rooms or about 31% of our total hotel space during a two-day tourney. Mr. Allred noted that a convenience store near one of their sites saw thousands of dollars in increased sales from this past June to the previous June, even with COVID-19. A typical game can draw between 100-400 fans per night, depending on the facility.

"Baseball leagues such as this can generate upwards to \$200 per capita in economic impact," noted Jeff Garstka, the City's Economic Development Director. "Also, many of the players in the league have not been exposed to Reidsville and all it has to offer. As these individuals finish college and move into various careers, the City may be able to capture new permanent residents as the players choose their next life move. This is a chance for Reidsville to make a strong first impression to a very sought-after sector of our nation's population – young professionals and families."

Better Quality of Life: Cloud noted that this type of project benefits our youth and gives our citizens something to do at night during the summer. Hopefully, it will encourage young kids to want to play baseball and allows individuals and families time outside watching America's favorite pastime. "Baseball popularity in Reidsville is growing so the arrival of the Old North State Collegiate Summer League will only fuel that interest," Cloud said. "That popularity was evident with the record number of children who registered to participate in our 2020 Spring Baseball/Softball recreation leagues pre-COVID-19. We subsequently postponed the league out of an abundance of caution, but we are planning on having those who registered in the spring to play in a late summer/fall league if conditions improve regarding the pandemic."

Better Facilities: With the improvements to Field #3 at Jaycee Ballpark, our facilities there will benefit our recreational leagues and increase our chances of drawing other tournaments to

Reidsville to play. The Old North State Collegiate play doesn't start until our rec leagues wrap up their seasons. "We are so excited to welcome The Old North State League to Reidsville, and we look forward to a long lasting partnership," Cloud said. "In addition to bringing summer collegiate baseball here, both the Old North State League, collectively with City staff, as well as staff individually are having discussions with various post-secondary education levels for opportunities to host tournaments in the future as well."

Cloud said these improvements should be completed over the course of this winter and early 2021, meaning the League could begin play by June of 2021. Mayor Jay Donecker stated, "This is another example of the 'can do' attitude that our City staff has, and we are very thankful." So soon, it will be time to "play ball"!

In other news:

Main Street Program – National Accreditation.

A big "shout out" to our Reidsville Downtown Corporation for getting our Main Street program nationally accredited for the first time ever! A special thanks to Main Street/Market Square Manager Missy Matthews & Economic Development Director Jeff Garstka for their efforts in this endeavor. Way to go Team Reidsville!

Downtown Farmer's Market.

The Downtown Farmers Market at Market Square continues to offer fresh fruits and vegetables to its patrons. As we have noted in the past, entry into the market is different this season as visitors must practice social distancing rules. Hours are 7 a.m. until 1 p.m. Saturdays, Tuesdays and Thursdays.

And a final reminder!

Have you filled out your 2020 Census? The City of Reidsville was still reaching for 60% participation when this column went to press. Census workers will soon start canvassing neighborhoods to reach those residents who have failed to respond. Why do we keep emphasizing how important the accurate reporting of our population in Reidsville is to the City? We'd love to get a share of the approximate \$675 billion the Federal Government gives annually to local and state governments. Much of that money is based on population and goes to provide much needed programs to our City as well. It also affects economic development because census data is used by business owners and developers to decide where they will open new stores or expand their operations. It might help us get that elusive Chick-fi-la franchise! Encourage your neighbors and family to **FILL IT OUT! Go TEAM REIDSVILLE!**