

Bridgeton Mayor Kelly at economic forum in White House

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NO IMAGE

By **Greg Adomaitis/The News of Cumberland County**



File PhotoKelly, center.

WASHINGTON — If bow ties suddenly start adorning the necks of national political figures, blame it on Bridgeton.

Mayor Albert Kelly will participate Monday at the White House in its "Forum on First Suburbs, Sustainability, Inclusion and Economic Growth," under the "Building One America" program.

"We'll be listening to national experts and experts here in the White House," Kelly said Sunday evening from Washington.

The meeting of these minds aims to find a way for places like Bridgeton to influence national policy, discuss economic conditions in "small to mid-sized towns" and how to revive them.

Speakers include White House Senior Advisor Valerie Jarrett and U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood.

About 150 municipal representatives from 22 East Coast areas were invited to the summit Monday. Kelly noted those representatives aren't all mayors or committee and council members. Others include faith-based figures, civic leaders and school board members.

Bridgeton is the southernmost locale from New Jersey making an appearance. Others include Collingswood, Lambertville, Union and Hamilton townships. State Assemblywoman Mila Jasey (D-Essex) was **also invited**.

A possible second round of meetings in Valley Forge, Pa. could be held this August. This East Coast cluster is just one of the region-specific hearings scheduled on the topic. Kelly said his invitation was extended by New Jersey Regional Coalition Community Organizer Michael Gross.

This isn't the first time the mayor has set his sights on Washington.

Take the recently launched Bridgeton branch of First Lady Michelle Obama's "Let's Move" campaign as an example.

"Wednesday, our 'Let's Move Coalition' began putting the finishing touches on an invite and brochure to the White House for a fall event," Kelly wrote in a letter to *The News* on Friday.

At a summer city council meeting, he set getting Mrs. Obama to Bridgeton as an endgoal for his health campaign that kicked off on June 25.

Maybe he'll get the chance to swing by her office today.

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