

Revamped city council faces African American chamber

by C. Denise Johnson
Courier Staff Writer

What was originally intended to be a panel discussion with city council members at the start of the summer evolved into a full-fledged media event as cameras and reporters with microphones jockeyed for position.

For the first time since the burial of Mayor Bob O'Connor, the new face of Pittsburgh was in the glare of spotlights, fresh from a taped late-night talk show appearance, along with more familiar ones in new positions.

When the date to visit the African American Chamber of Commerce's Power Breakfast was set back in July, Luke Ravenstahl was the president of city council and few had given thought to an immediate future as mayor of the Steel City.

The new mayor continued to reaffirm his intention to carry on the work of his predecessor and pledged to continue the

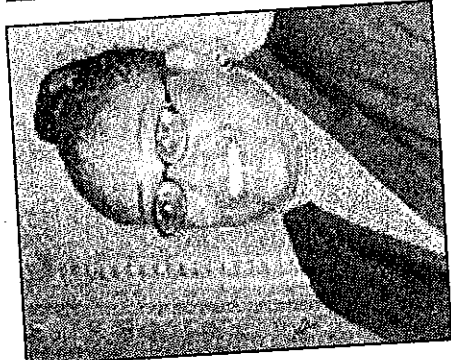


LUKE RAVENSTAHL

push for more inclusion in the City-Council building.

Ravenstahl was accompanied by several council members; including his successor, council President Doug Shields, and new President Pro Tem Tonya Payne.

Chamber President Doris Carson Williams encouraged the overflow audience to make note of who made the effort to appear at the breakfast.



TONYA PAYNE

Daniel Deasy was "an excused absence" due to family obligations and James Motznik was a no-show.

Ravenstahl then introduced Shields, who then introduced his colleagues by their district and committee assignments as council has been restructured.

Bill Peduto boasted about the increased accessibility to Wi-Fi under his leadership chairing the Committee on Fa-



BILL PEDUTO

cilities, Technology and the Arts, citing the incentive offered to US Wireless to provide wireless service to the community block grant neighborhoods for a fee waiver.

"That clause in the contract is now being followed (and touted) by Boston although it started here in Pittsburgh," Peduto said.

Payne was quick to acknowledge the legacy of Valerie Mc-

Donald, the first African-American woman to serve as council president the members encouraging the membership of the chamber to consider her office an open door. Jeffrey Koch said one of his priorities was to streamline the procurement process for small businesses by the end of the year.

Carson-Williams reiterated the membership's ability to handle an array of support services for procurement and contracting consideration.

Twanda Carlisle addressed the increase of homicides and violence and stressed, "It is incumbent upon to the residents to speak up and speak out loud on what they don't want in their community."

"People tell me what happens in Shadyside and Squirrel Hill and how things are taken care of quickly," Carlisle said. "That happens because residents speak out quickly and say something. We have to do the same in our community."