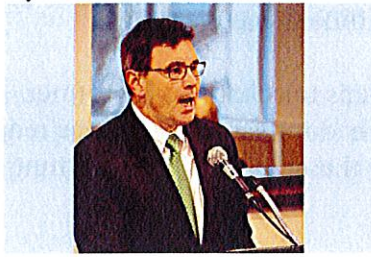


Davin promotes inclusive development at Chamber Breakfast

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By Christian Morrow



DENNIS DAVIN (Photo by J.L. Martello)

For Dennis Davin, his appearance at the most recent PowerBreakfast meeting held by the African American Chamber of Commerce was like old home week. He got to reconnect with people he'd worked with as the head of economic development for Allegheny County, and before that, for the City of Pittsburgh.

He also got to reconnect with chamber members, and let them know that now, as Pennsylvania's Secretary of Community and Economic Development, he and Governor Tom Wolf are working toward greater minority and small business inclusion in contracts with the commonwealth.

"I want to echo the governor's remarks when he was here (at the chamber's annual luncheon in December) that we are making significant strides in removing barriers and leveling the playing field. His executive order on minority and small business procurement charged us to do something about it," said Davin.

"But we have to look beyond contracts and procurement to determine what community agendas are and change (development program) guidelines to match."

On the big-picture scale, Davin noted that Philadelphia is doing great. It is seeing an influx of young people and entrepreneurs, and has a vibrant night life now primarily because New York City has "out-priced" itself.

Davin, however, said he and his team are planning to refocus development efforts to the community level from the big-picture approach favored by the previous administration. That will require some retooling and even elimination of some of the department's programs, especially those that lack the flexibility to meet the needs of specific communities.

"I don't want to have programs, just to have programs," he said. "We need to streamline."

Davin said one of the programs that has been successful, will—hopefully—become more successful if it is expanded per the governor's wishes.

"The governor has proposed tripling budget for Keystone Innovation Zone Tax Credits—to about \$25 million per year," he said.

The KIZ tax credits are designed to assist early-stage companies gain their footing. The day before his PowerBreakfast appearance, Davin's department announced the approval of \$18 million in KIZ funds for young companies throughout the state. More than \$1.7 million was awarded to companies in Pittsburgh.

"One of the problems is there needs to be better marketing of the region's workforce, facilities—like the airport and the job Christine Cassotis is doing," he said. "Delta just announced daily direct flights to Los Angeles. Dawn Keezer, director of the Pittsburgh Film Office was ecstatic."

That prompted chamber President and CEO Doris Carson Williams to acknowledge former Pittsburgh Councilman Sala Udin who told the audience that he had forwarded the forms required for any business interested in providing services to the company that will soon begin filming August Wilson's "Fences," starring Denzel Washington.

She also announced several upcoming events, including a members' workshop on access to capital, Feb. 23 and another on supply chain management, Feb. 23. She also said Mayor Bill Peduto is scheduled as the speaker for the March PowerBreakfast on March 18.