



PARTNERS—African American Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Doris Carson Williams praises Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto in her introduction at the March 20 PowerBreakfast meeting. (Photo by J.L. Martello)

In describing to the African American Chamber of Commerce what he is trying to do with his administration, Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto made a simple business analogy.

“If you operated your business today like you did in 1970, you’d fail. But in government that (level of waste, inefficiency and ineffectiveness) is accepted,” he told the March 21 PowerBreakfast audience.

“So we opened up hiring. And with third-party vetting by headhunters and a citizens’ committee we’ve hired the most diverse and talented administration in the city’s history—and we’re starting to get that wind in our sails.”

In a casual, note-free address, Peduto recounted how he is trying to create a new culture in city government, changing it from one where mayors like David Lawrence and a handful of people made all the decisions to one where initiative come from the residents and are refined upward.

He said the change he’s after is reflected in work being done by his “new visionary police chief, Cameron McLay” and by initiatives like the Boilermakers Union local 154 “Guns for Opportunity” trade-in program.

“They give kids free training, (those who need it) a month to get clean, you don’t need a car, and if they pass, they’re in the union,” he said. “I’m hoping to set up the same thing with the carpenters and laborers unions.”

Peduto said he has focused 30 percent of his office on outreach and inclusion efforts for the 17 neighborhoods and their residents that have historically been neglected in terms of services, development and investment.

“I could leave and sit on a beach for two years and parts of the city would do great—but that 30 percent wouldn’t,” he said. “That’s the challenge, thinking of ways to make Pittsburgh reach its potential.”

In terms of business that means making sure people like the chamber's members participate in the coming construction boom including office space, housing, apartments, hotels and sewage infrastructure upgrades required by the federal government.

"We got a late start, but the Equal Opportunity Review Commission is setting up a website to monitor contract compliance and the disparity study, is now finally being done," he said.

"We're also breaking down contracts into smaller pieces, and doing outreach and assembling business organizations in those neglected neighborhoods I mentioned. It's a culture change. If we can change the model to one where government is there to empower others—watch out."

After thanking the mayor and Comcast for sponsoring this particular PowerBreakfast meeting, chamber President and CEO Doris Carson Williams reminded everyone of the upcoming events she had outlined before Peduto's arrival:

Tuesday, March 31, Members Mixer at Maison Du Paix;

- Friday, April 17, PowerBreakfast with developer Keith B. Key;

- Wednesday, April 22, Financial analysis workshop with Harvey Smith;

- Wednesday, April 29, Members' mixer with the Center for Organ Recovery & Education;

- Thursday, April 30, Candidate's Forum for the City Council Dist. 9 race, and

- Thursday, May 7, Annual Meeting and Luncheon with speaker Highmark President and CEO David Holmberg.