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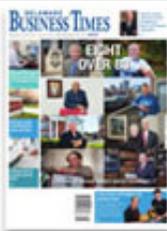
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Business coalition launches "Ready in 6" initiative to streamline permitting process

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streamline permitting process

July 8, 2019

Last October, the Delaware Prosperity Partnership (DPP), the Delaware State Chamber of Commerce, and CSC sponsored an economic-development conference that included a panel with a couple of site selectors and moderated by Gov. John Carney, who told the 300-400 people in the room that Delaware was not being considered for many corporate relocations because it took too long to move from a permit request to putting the shovel in the ground.

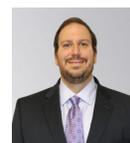
Attendees at the meeting said the panelists described themselves as "national site eliminators" who take prospective locations for their clients' business and put them into a funnel. They then winnow them down for various reasons and get to the bottom of the funnel with three or four candidates where the company could put their business.



Robert Perkins

Delaware Business Roundtable Executive Director Bob Perkins says the panelists told the attendees that "Delaware doesn't even get into the funnel because it takes the state and counties up to 24 months to issue permits. They said quite frankly if you're not close to the six-month mark, you're not going to be considered."

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"They told us we have to move at the pace of the business," DPP Executive Director Kurt Foreman told the DBT in May. "You have to be able to say it's going to take X months and then deliver in that timeframe. If we improve the process that only makes Delaware that much more competitive."

"That meeting was an eye-opener," says Perkins. "At the end of the panel, Gov. Carney stood up and said, "'You heard it; we have to do this much more quickly and efficiently.' So a few of us got together in the back and started talking. How can we be more helpful and work to make Delaware more competitive? How do we get into the funnel?"

Enter Ready in 6

The Delaware Business Roundtable has launched what it's calling the Ready in 6 initiative by hiring KPMG to develop a plan to help the state figure out a way to reduce the amount of time it takes to get approvals. The Roundtable is working with a broad coalition of business organizations across the state that are providing direction and helping fund the initiative.

Perkins concedes that it took a while to launch Ready in 6 but said, "The work you do before you launch can be more important than the work you do after. You have to get it right with the right people. When you talk about the Amazons of the world, people get it. But our economy is not made up of a couple of Amazons. It's made up of hundreds and hundreds of small businesses who can't deal with an inefficient process."



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“The first thing we learned is that you can’t do these things on your own, Perkins said before ticking off a laundry list of coalition members that includes the Delaware State Chamber, Kent Economic Partnership, Greater Kent Committee, Sussex County Economic Development, Sussex Economic Development Action Team, ACEC Delaware (American Council of Engineering Companies), the Committee of 100, the Central Delaware Chamber, the New Castle County Chamber, Delaware Contractors Association, the Delaware Chapter of Associated Builders and Contractors, and the Home Builders Association of Delaware.

The KPMG project team is being headed by H. Robert Boehringer, III, one of the panelists back in October and senior manager for Global Location and Expansion Services at KPMG since February 2007.

Perkins said KPMG has begun interviewing about 100 people and businesses in Delaware – people who live it every day – “to find the pinch points and figure out how we can help. We don’t want to lose jobs to other areas



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because we're slow. We want people working here, living here, spending money here, and paying taxes here."

Perkins expects KPMG to provide a report within the next three to four months.

"Site selectors have made it clear that six months for approval of new projects is necessary for Delaware to be competitive with other regions to recruit and grow quality employers," said Jennifer Kmiec, executive director of The Committee of 100, which describes itself as a non-partisan, nonprofit alliance of Delaware business leaders that works to promote responsible economic development and address issues that affect Delaware's economic health. "The Committee of 100 and our partners in the Ready in 6 coalition are dedicated to developing an action plan from the KPMG findings. We will work with state and local governments and our members to implement process improvements, identify efficiencies and shorten approval timelines. We all recognize the urgency of the Ready in 6 initiative and have committed to real action, so this doesn't become just another report sitting on the shelf gathering dust."



Jennifer Kmiec

Foreman says this project is critical to helping DPP and other economic-development organizations be more successful: "If the community can say we analyzed a site and it's going to cost \$600,000 and take eight weeks to put in (water and sewers and whatever else we need, including an



Kurt Foreman

assessment of traffic implications); if we can tell the prospect that we've already thought about how to fund it when it's needed; and we've already designed it, great. You de-risked that piece of the project."

Perkins says DPP has already gotten the state into the pipeline through its marketing efforts, but there's more to be done. The Ready in 6 organizers do not include DPP or state officials, but they are keeping everyone up to speed on what's happening.

"It's important to understand that we're talking to people – particularly small businesses – about how they've been impacted by the process and to capture ideas on the best way to proceed," Perkins said. "This is not an effort to change any environmental laws or reduce community impact on discussion about projects. We just want to make the process more efficient."

"Delaware prides itself on being small and nimble," Perkins said. "In this area, we are not, and that means fewer relocations or business expansions, fewer jobs, and less talent entering the state. We need to change that."

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