

Monday, August 10, 2009

‘Norristown Has Tremendous Potential for a Bright Future’

By CARL ROTENBERG, Times Herald Staff

NORRISTOWN — Ken Klothen, the recently-appointed Montgomery County Economic Development Director, had the elan to drive to a Norristown council meeting Tuesday night on his Yamaha VStar 950 motorcycle.

The former Pennsylvania Deputy Secretary for Community Affairs and Development also has the resume to direct the county’s seven-year, \$105 million Countywide Strategic Development program for older Montgomery County towns.

“Norristown has tremendous potential for a bright future,” Klothen said. “Its best times are ahead of it.”

Klothen said progress in getting the Lafayette Street corridor project moving forward included recent meetings with both the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) Secretary Allen Biehler. A future meeting by Klothen has been scheduled with the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission.

Norristown and county officials have been advancing a multi-million dollar plan to extend Lafayette Street to a connection with the Pennsylvania Turnpike through a slip ramp exit. The project, expected to take six to seven years to reach construction stage, is intended to jumpstart Norristown’s moribund commercial and retail markets.

“This is moving forward,” Klothen said. “We hope to start acquiring ground and extending Lafayette Street.”

Klothen was the Deputy Secretary for Community Affairs and Development from January 2005. He served as the executive director of the Governor’s Center for Local Government Services and the executive director of the Community Action Team within the Community Affairs department from May 2003 to early 2005.

The Swarthmore resident worked in Washington, D.C. as the general counsel for the Corporation for National Service from January 1998 to March 1999 and as executive director of the Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets in the United States from 1999 to March 2001.

Klothen started his professional career practicing corporate law from 1981 to 1989 in Philadelphia and Cincinnati, Ohio. He was an adjunct law professor at the University of Pennsylvania School of Law, Case Western University School of Law and Widener University Law School from 1990 to 1994.

He served as president of TADD International of Swarthmore, a consulting firm for international development, from 1994 to 1997.

Klothen told council he was ready and willing to help Norristown with community development issues.

“My primary purpose was to say hello,” Klothen said. “I’m here in Norristown working every day at One Montgomery Plaza on the 8th floor. I look forward to working with all of you.”

Carl Rotenberg can be reached at crotenberg@timesherald.com or 610-272-2500, ext. 350.

© 2009 timesherald.com, a Journal Register Property