



2022 SPRING LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

Speaker Bios & Session Overviews

2022 PEDA SPRING LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE - SPEAKER BIOS

The Honorable Kerry Benninghoff, House Majority Leader, Pennsylvania House of Representatives

Kerry A. Benninghoff believes government should improve the lives of those it serves, recognizing that every dollar government spends was taken from someone who worked hard to earn it.

Representing the 171st legislative district, Kerry is passionate about cancer research and other healthcare initiatives, ensuring an educational system that gives our children a clear path to good-paying careers, being a voice for victims of crime, as well as standing up for seniors while building a better future for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Kerry believes taxes should be low and works hard to ensure your dollars are spent wisely. He is a watchdog for government waste, a longtime advocate for greater transparency and supporter of government reform.

Kerry was elected by his colleagues in June 2020 to serve as Majority Leader.

Prior to serving as Majority Leader, Kerry served on the Leadership team as Majority Whip and for two terms as the House Majority Policy Committee chairman. Kerry also previously served as chairman of the House Majority Finance and State Government committees. He is the founder and former chairman of the bipartisan Cancer Caucus.

Prior to being elected to represent the 171st, Kerry worked in construction, cared for patients as a hospital orderly and served Centre County for two terms as county coroner.

Kerry is a charter member of Leadership Centre County and formerly served on the board of directors of Easter Seals of Central Pennsylvania and the Bellefonte YMCA. He is a member of the Bellefonte Kiwanis Club, the Fraternal Order of Police, Bald Eagle Lodge No. 51, as well as an active member of Faith United Methodist Church in Bellefonte. He serves on the board of directors of Centre Home Care Inc. and also formerly served as co-chairman of the bicameral Penn State Forum on Higher Education.

Kerry is a graduate of State College Area High School and attended Pennsylvania State University. He is a graduate of the Certified Coroners Training Program conducted in Hershey by the state of Pennsylvania.

Kerry resides in Bellefonte and is the father of five children – Michael, Heather, Amy, Kelley and Ryleigh. At the end of 2010, Ryleigh succumbed to cancer.

Karl Blischke, Executive Director, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts

Karl Blischke has held a variety of senior-level, public positions and has more than 16 years of hands-on experience, and overall managerial responsibility, promoting vibrant and prosperous communities through cultural and economic development.

Karl is Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, which is focused on strengthening communities through the arts and providing resources and technical assistance for the creative industry in the commonwealth's 67 counties.

Previously, in Florida, Karl joined the Governor's Office of Tourism, Trade and Economic Development, where he was responsible for promoting job creation and community development in the state's rural communities, and directing programs aimed at increasing access to capital for small businesses. Following this work, Karl was named

Director of Strategic Business Development for the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, focusing on the state's efforts to diversify its economy and business attraction, expansion and retention.

The Honorable Matthew Bradford, Chair, House Appropriations Committee, Pennsylvania House of Representatives

Matt Bradford proudly represents the citizens of central Montgomery County, while serving in Democratic leadership as chair of the House Appropriations Committee. Matt is committed to ensuring taxpayer dollars are invested and used responsibly in the state budget to provide the best quality of life for all Pennsylvanians.

Prior to being elected Appropriations Chair, Matt served for two years as chair of the House State Government Committee and spent eight years as a member of the Appropriations Committee, where he fought harsh cuts to public education funding, advocated for good, family-sustaining jobs, and prioritized affordable and accessible health care. As a father of school-age children, Matt has seen first-hand the vitally important role a school plays in shaping lives and has dedicated his work as an elected official to ensuring all kids have access to high-quality public schools.

A life-long resident of southeastern Pennsylvania, Matt earned both his undergraduate and law degrees from Villanova University. Before he was elected to the legislature in 2009, Governor Ed Rendell appointed Matt to serve as municipal administrator and chief executive officer of Norristown Borough. In less than three years, he led the municipality away from bankruptcy, securing public and private investments and overseeing major improvements to public services. Today, Matt continues to represent Norristown at the state level and remains deeply committed to the community's long-term success.

Matt is an avid Philadelphia sports fan and lives in Worcester Township with his wife, Renee, and their four children.

The Honorable Amanda Cappelletti, Chair, Senate Community, Economic & Recreational Development Committee, Pennsylvania Senate

Senator Amanda Cappelletti is a born and raised advocate for Pennsylvania. Through her upbringing and career, Amanda has put helping others first. Whether it was a service project in junior high or stepping up to protect reproductive rights in Pennsylvania, Amanda will lend a hand to those who need it most.

An attorney with a Master's in Public Health, Amanda has worked in Harrisburg to advance progressive policy. She worked with Representative Donna Bullock and as a Fellow for the ACLU of Pennsylvania. She was a member of the first group awarded the William Penn Fellowship through the Governor's office: first as an advocate for children at the Office of Child Development and Early Learning, and then at the Department of Human Services as a policy specialist tracking legislation to assess implementation. Most recently, Amanda served as Director of Policy for Planned Parenthood advocating for proactive reproductive legislation. In 2017, Amanda was elected to East Norriton's Board of Supervisors, where she led the conversation in police reform and successfully decriminalized marijuana.

As a Senator, Amanda will work tirelessly to introduce and support legislation to address funding for our public schools, defend access to healthcare, and protect our environment. At home, she will be out in the community, listening to the people in our neighborhoods, ensuring their voices are heard in Harrisburg.

Amanda will advocate for progressive values while working across the aisle towards shared values. She'll be a Senator who will restore integrity and refocus the conversation on the issues.

A life-long resident of Pennsylvania, Amanda grew up in Boyertown with her parents where she graduated from Boyertown Area Senior High. She attended Chestnut Hill College for her undergraduate degree and received her Law Degree and Master's in Public Health from Temple University. She currently resides in East Norriton with her husband, Gregory McQuiston, a U.S. Navy veteran and her dog Luna, a new rescue puppy.

Laura Goodrich Cairns, Economic Development Director, Delaware County Commerce Center

Laura Goodrich Cairns has spent over 20 years working in economic development, she currently serves as the Economic Development Director for Delaware County, PA in the southeast region of Pennsylvania. Laura has worked on major public/private projects including redevelopment of a shipyard to a racino, and development of an MLS Stadium. She has also administered over two-dozen state capital grants totaling north of \$52MM, although her favorite projects throughout the years were completed with smaller firms which created family sustaining wages, and views economic development as more than just private investment and job creation.

Dr. Ronald Kander, PhD, Associate Provost for Applied Research, Thomas Jefferson University

Dr. Ron Kander is the Associate Provost for Applied Research at Thomas Jefferson University. He is also the founding Dean of the Kanbar College of Design, Engineering and Commerce at Jefferson and is a Professor in the College's Engineering Program. He teaches and does research in the areas of material selection, materials processing, characterization of composite materials, and systems modeling.

Before joining Jefferson, he was founding Director of the School of Engineering at James Madison University and a faculty member in the Materials Science & Engineering Department at Virginia Tech. Before that, he was a Senior Engineer at DuPont in the Advanced Composites Division of the Fibers Department and in the Polymer Physics Group of the Central Research Department.

Dr. Kander's recent work has focused on an integrated study of the material science, process engineering, product design, supply chain economics and sustainability of industrial and consumer products made from hemp-derived materials. He is a member of All Together Now PA's Hemp Coalition and currently chairs the PA Department of Agriculture's Hemp Steering Committee.

Dr. Kander received his BS in Chemical Engineering from Carnegie-Mellon University and his PhD in Chemical Engineering from the University of Delaware.

Adam Kenney, Managing Director of Programs, Bridgeway Capital

Adam Kenney is the Managing Director of Programs at Bridgeway Capital, a Pittsburgh-based social impact investor driving equitable economic development in the region. He supports a talented team designing and delivering high impact business assistance programs to a wide variety of underserved entrepreneurs and to small businesses bringing economic growth to disinvested communities. Adam utilizes a comprehensive nonprofit administration and entrepreneurial support skill set at Bridgeway. Before transitioning into the Managing Director of Programs role, Adam built the Creative Business Accelerator, Monmade, PG&H, and ORIGINS programs at Bridgeway. These programs support over 600 creative businesses across the region, and channel Bridgeway's economic development capabilities into the regional creative economy. He began his career at Bridgeway as the Director of Communications where he crafted powerful content on the transformative power of capital and capacity building for small businesses.

His previous position was as the Executive Director of Touchstone Center for Crafts where he managed a wide range of activities including marketing, development, and program design. Adam also served as the Manager of Operations

for the Arts Education Collaborative, an arts education advocacy organization under the Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh. In addition, he possesses 20 years of experience as a professional glassmaker in production and academic settings. Adam earned a BA in History from Centre College, and graduated from Carnegie Mellon University with a Master of Art Management (MAM) degree. He also completed post-baccalaureate studies at the Appalachian Center of Craft in a variety of craft media and mixed media sculpture. He was featured as one of “25 Essential Pittsburghers” by Next Pittsburgh, and included as one of 13 “hardworking innovators” in the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation’s 75th Anniversary Impact Report. He also serves on the board of directors for the Union Project and Protohaven, two vital arts and cultural assets in the Pittsburgh area.

Rebecca MacBlane, Executive Director, Regional Development Funding Corporation

Rebecca MacBlane has served as Executive Director of Regional Development Funding Corporation (RDFC) since 2006. RDFC is a non-profit corporation which is authorized to serve as an agent for three government loan programs for businesses: the U.S. Small Business Administration 504 Loan Program, the SBA Community Advantage Pilot Loan Program and two Revolving Loan Funds through the Economic Development Administration. RDFC has earned the title of the highest volume Certified Development Company for the previous fourteen years in the Western Pennsylvania District Office of the SBA and serves as the only State-wide Certified Development Company in West Virginia.

Prior to joining RDFC, Rebecca worked as a commercial loan officer at several community banks and has focused on government loan programs for most of her banking career. Rebecca currently serves as the Chairperson of the Board of the Alliance for Small Business Finance (ASBF) and has been an active board member of the organization since 2001. ASBF’s mission includes providing comprehensive educational and networking opportunities to lending professionals, economic development specialists and resource partners. She also serves on the Board of Directors of the Risk Management Association Pittsburgh Chapter and is a Board Member and former Fundraising Chairperson of the Western Pennsylvania Small Business Network. In 2008 she was honored by the SBA’s Pittsburgh District Office as its 2008 Financial Services Champion, and in 2011 was awarded the title of Financial Services Champion of the Year by the U.S. Small Business Administration for Region III, which consists of West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland, District of Columbia, Virginia and Delaware.

Rebecca holds a B.S. in Education and a Masters in Business Administration from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. She resides in Pittsburgh with her husband, and they are the proud parents of two adult sons, two dogs and three cats.

Stephen McKnight, President & CEO, Altoona Blair County Development Corporation

Stephen has more than 30 years’ experience in “placed-based” economic development strategies, project management and public policy. He has assisted with numerous business expansion projects resulting in millions of total investment. During his career, Stephen has worked for both private development companies and industry trade organizations in Washington, D.C. He contributed to the formation of federal transportation and economic development policy.

As a co-founder of Fourth Economy Consulting, he worked with communities and industry across the country building competitive operational growth strategies. Stephen has demonstrated core competencies in site selection, budget analysis, government relations, proposal development, public/media relations, event planning, membership development, fundraising, image branding, public policy analysis, and issue driven coalition building.

Specialties: Stephen has earned professional certifications in "Entrepreneurial and Small Business Development," "Land Use Planning for Economic Development," "Technology-Led Economic Development," and "Business Retention and Expansion." He conducts numerous public presentations and workshops on economic development

topics each year. Stephen received the SIGMAS research award for a paper entitled "Linking Economic Development and Workforce Diversity through Action Research."

Stephen currently serves on the Board of Directors of Goodwill of the Southern Alleghenies and the Pennsylvania Economic Development Association. When not working, and sometimes even while he is, he can be found skiing, hiking and cycling throughout our great mountain communities.

Sarah Merritt, Director of Creative Communities, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts

Sarah Merritt is the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts Director of Creative Communities leading work that supports arts-based community and economic development projects and programs that promote community vitality, equity, and community and economic development. Previously, Merritt served as director of the Arts Council of Wayne County (ACWC) in Goldsboro, North Carolina. In that role, she led the ACWC through reorganization to fully serve the county's diverse civilian and military populations. From 2009 to 2017, she served on the board of Arts NC, the state's arts advocacy organization, where she led the 2015-2020 Strategic Planning Committee and served as board chair in 2016. Merritt has experience as an educator, a small business owner, and a residential and commercial real estate broker. She holds a bachelor's degree in Art History from the University of Maryland and a Master of Science in Arts Administration from Drexel University. In her spare time, Sarah enjoys painting, cooking, reading, gardening, hiking, kayaking, and traveling. She lives in Carlisle, Pennsylvania with her husband, Jeff, thirteen year-old son, Ian, and dogs, Doc and Teddy.

Adam Meurer, CHMM, PWS, Vice President & Principal, ECS Mid-Atlantic, LLC

Adam Meurer is a Vice President and Principal with ECS Mid-Atlantic, LLC who believes in the power of a client-focused work philosophy. As a member of the ECS team since 2008, he manages environmental operations for ECS' Southern Mid-Atlantic region. Originally from western New York, he is currently based in Charlottesville, VA.

Adam is involved in the research, preparation, and reviews of Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments, Voluntary Remediation Reports, Environmental Impact Statements, Wetland Delineations and Permits, and Threatened and Endangered Species Reviews, among others. His duties also include subsurface hydrologic analyses, pollutant fate and transport modeling and impacted soil studies and remediation.

Adam received his undergraduate degree in Environmental Science from Allegheny College in Meadville, PA, and his Master's in Environmental Science from the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, VA. He is an active member of ASTM's E50 Committee and participates in the revisions of various environmental industry standards and guides.

Brian Points, President, Points Consulting

Brian Points is the President of Points Consulting, a management consulting firm focused on the intersection of economic development and real estate analytics. For the past 15+ years, Brian has focused on economic development best practices based on deep quantitative analysis. His experience working with both public and private sector organizations in 38 states provide him a broad perspective on what works in the realm of economic and community development. Brian lives in Idaho with his wife and four children. He enjoys conducting community field research with either a mountain bike beneath him or a pint in his hand.

Alex Rahn, Vice President, Wanner Associates

Alex Rahn has over twenty-four years of experience in the advocacy, corporate, government, association, non-profit, and political sectors. Alex works extensively on funding issues as well as education, health & human services,

economic development and workforce legislative issues. Prior to joining Wanner Associates, Alex owned his own state, municipal, and federal government relations firm. He also served as the Southeast Political Director for Senator Arlen Specter and spent more than six years working as both the District Director and Campaign Manager for Congressman Curt Weldon. Alex is also former Vice President of Government Affairs for the Rajant Corporation, Government Affairs Manager for Galaxy Scientific and Executive Director for the Delaware County Transportation Management Agency. A member of the PA Association of Government Relations, Alex serves(d) on the Board of Directors for several organizations, including the American Red Cross of Chester County, United Way of Delaware County, and CASA/Children's Advocates of Delaware County. Alex is a former Councilman of Ridley Park Borough, Political Party official for Chester County, and Veteran with the PA Army National Guard, and holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from West Chester University.

Bruce Reddock, Director of Economic Development, The Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce

Bruce Reddock joined The Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce in July 2015 as part of the Scranton Lackawanna Industrial Building Co. (SLIBCO), the economic development affiliate of the Chamber.

As Director of Economic Development, Bruce is responsible for managing the attraction of new industries and the expansion of local businesses within Lackawanna County, as well as overseeing land development projects within SLIBCO's portfolio. These initiatives generate economic development projects that assist in the creation and retention of jobs, providing significant economic impact to Lackawanna County.

After graduating from Misericordia University in 2013 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Government, Law and National Security, Bruce relocated to New York City to begin his professional career, taking a job in the education and technology industry.

Prior to his role at The Chamber, Bruce held several marketing positions with multi-national companies dealing in both the B2B and B2C channels. Bruce served as the Graduate Program Territory Manager for The Princeton Review of NYC and prior to his work at the Chamber, held the role of Market Development Manager for Coca-Cola Refreshments.

In 2015, Bruce was recognized by the Northeast Pennsylvania Business Journal as a Top 20 Under 40 business professional. Bruce also serves on the Economic Revitalization Committee for Scranton Tomorrow, as well as NEPA Moves; an initiative focused on providing equitable transit solutions to the residents of Northeast Pennsylvania. In 2021, Bruce was recognized by the Industrial Asset Management Council (IAMC) as a Fellow through his completion of IAMC's leadership development program.

Bruce currently resides in Peckville, Pennsylvania, with his wife Holly and two pit bulls, Maverick & Charlie.

Lisa Riggs, President, EDC of Lancaster County

Lisa Riggs serves as President of the Economic Development Company of Lancaster County and EDC Finance, having joined the organizations in July 2014. She has led the organization's increased focus on supporting existing businesses to stay and grow in Lancaster, while adding data analytics to underpin EDC's economic strategies. Prior to joining EDC, she served as President of the Lancaster Barnstormers, a professional minor league baseball team, based in Lancaster, PA, and as President of the James Street Improvement District (JSID), a community and economic development organization focused on parts of the City of Lancaster.

The first phase of Ms. Riggs' career occurred in Baltimore, MD. She served as Vice President of Economic Development for the Downtown Partnership of Baltimore. Prior to that she helped shape the early years of the Greater Baltimore Alliance, a regional economic development marketing effort.

Ms. Riggs resides in East Hempfield Township, Lancaster County, with her husband and one high schooler. Her daughter is a sophomore at Penn State University in State College. Ms. Riggs is a graduate of the Johns Hopkins University. She currently serves her community by serving on the Boards of the Pennsylvania College of Art & Design, the Pennsylvania Economic Development Association, Discover Lancaster and the Lancaster STEM Alliance. She also chairs the Steering Committee of the Lancaster Clean Water Partners and serves on the Lancaster County Agricultural Council and the Lancaster County Transportation Technical Advisory Committee.

Sherwood Robbins, Managing Director, Seedcopa

Sherwood serves as Seedcopa's Managing Director. Seedcopa is a private, non-profit organization created nearly 40 years ago to help small business get the money they need to start, grow, and expand their businesses. In this capacity, he oversees a staff of 7 professionals; interacts with banking partners throughout Pennsylvania and Delaware; manages the partner relationships with numerous State-Wide Economic Development Agencies; and is responsible for the enhancement of Seedcopa's process and menu of financing services. He is proud of Seedcopa's history and its staff, with 85 combined years of dedicated government lending experience.

Sherwood joined Seedcopa in 2007 as a Relationship Manager to further expand its SBA 504 loan program and to develop SBA and USDA facilitation services for banks looking to enter the Government Loan arena. Since that time, the organization has added new State loan programs to its offering as well. In nearly 15 years at Seedcopa, over 600 loans across all programs have been approved. Borrowers have committed to creating nearly 6,800 local jobs through these Federal and State economic development loan programs.

Prior to joining Seedcopa, Sherwood spent over 15 years in the banking industry, acquiring experience and developing skills in Commercial Banking, Retail and the Investment departments. For many of those years, he's served as a dedicated Government Loan lender, developing an extensive network of business associates and centers of influence. He enjoys many national and local guest-speaking invitations each year, covering the key aspects of SBA and other Federal and State government loan programs.

Derek Slaughter, Mayor, City of Williamsport

Mayor Derek Slaughter was born and raised in Williamsport. He attended Williamsport Area School District and graduated from Williamsport Area High School in 1999. Mayor Slaughter earned his undergraduate degree from Penn State University in 2003 where he earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Information Sciences & Technology with a minor in Spanish. While at Penn State, he also spent a semester studying abroad in Salamanca, Spain. Mayor Slaughter completed his Master of Education degree from the University of Maryland, College Park in 2005. He taught mathematics in the Williamsport Area School District and was also an adjunct professor of mathematics at the Pennsylvania College of Technology. Mayor Slaughter was the head coach for the Williamsport High School girls' varsity basketball team for 10 years. Prior to becoming mayor, he sat on the City of Williamsport's Zoning Hearing Board, was a board member of the Greater Lycoming Habitat for Humanity as well as a board member of the Lycoming County United Way. Mayor Slaughter is on the steering committee for the Mayors' Innovation Project, serves on the Executive Board of the Pennsylvania Municipal League (PML) and is the legislative co-chair of PML. Mayor Slaughter was appointed by Governor Wolf to serve as a Commission member on the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD). Formerly, Mayor Slaughter served as a Williamsport City Councilman prior to becoming mayor. He began his tenure as mayor in January of 2020. Mayor Slaughter resides in the City with his wife Vanessa, a Registered Nurse Supervisor at UPMC Susquehanna, and their three children.

Phil Stober, Division Chief for Economic Development, Bureau of Market Development, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture

Prior to joining the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, in February, 2020, Phil was the principal owner and operator of Bare Foot Organics @ Greystone Farm, a USDA Certified Organic Produce &, Pastured Poultry Farm and Agricultural Marketing Company, in West Cornwall Township.

His current work with PDA, as Division Chief for Economic Development, is to ensure Pennsylvania's premiere industry remains sustainable and viable into the 21st Century. Also, as Director of the Agricultural Business Development Center, one of Phil's goals is to make Industrial Hemp a centerpiece of the Pennsylvania agricultural economy. He is eager to help the industry thrive.

A graduate of Boston University, Phil recently sold his organic farm in Lebanon County and currently resides in Mountville (Lancaster County) with his wife of 34 years, Barbara Vitanza and their two farm cats, Barble & Squeak.

Fred Strathmeyer, Jr., Deputy Secretary, Plant Industry & Consumer Protection, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture

Deputy Secretary for Plant Industry and Consumer Protection, Fred R. Strathmeyer Jr. was a co-owner of Strathmeyer Forests Inc. of York, a family business specialized in Christmas tree and evergreen nursery production, for over 35 years. A Bloomsburg University political science graduate, Deputy Strathmeyer has represented both the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau and the Pennsylvania Christmas Tree Growers Association at the state and national levels. He was appointed by former agricultural secretaries to serve on multiple committees and task forces.

As the deputy secretary for plant industry and consumer protection, Deputy Strathmeyer oversees the department's bureaus of Plant Industry, Ride and Measurement Standards, Dog Law Enforcement, the State Horse Racing Commission, and the Hardwoods Development Council. He serves as the designated chair for the Governor's Invasive Species Council, the Controlled Plant and Noxious Weed Committee and the Amusement Ride Safety Board, to name a few, highlighting the department's commitment to a sustainable and safe food supply, along with good stewardship of the land and natural resources.

The Honorable Neil Weaver, Acting Secretary, Pennsylvania DCED

Neil Weaver has two decades of experience in non-profit and government management, operations, and communications. During his career, Neil has served in executive management at both the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) and the Department of Environmental Protection.

In his current role as Acting Secretary at DCED, Neil functions as the chief executive of an agency that is responsible for administering grants, loans and tax credits that spur economic growth, community revitalization, and job creation throughout the state by providing strategic technical assistance, training, and financial resources to help our communities and industries flourish.

Prior to his current role, Neil served as Executive Deputy Secretary at DCED, and was responsible for an approximately \$1 billion budget that includes both federal and state funding. His duties included all agency operations including budget oversight and implementation, human resources, program management and promotion.

Neil previously served in the Office of Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf where he established and developed the Office of Performance Through Excellence, focused on sustainable government efficiency and performance

management programs and training. His service in the public sector also included serving as a director of communications and press secretary for the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection.

Neil has worked at two national environmental firms specializing in client management, government, communications and community relations, and worked as a national fundraising manager for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation in Bethesda, Maryland. His background also includes service as the chief of staff to former gubernatorial primary candidate Kathleen McGinty. Neil has served as vice secretary-treasurer for the York City General Authority and is currently a member of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education's Board of Governors where he serves as vice chair of the University Success Committee.

Neil graduated from Clarion University of Pennsylvania with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Communications and currently serves as a member of the Board of Trustees for the University and as Chair for the Presidential Leadership. Neil is a resident of York, Pennsylvania with his two daughters.

Steve Wray, MS, Senior VP & Principal, Econsult Solutions, Inc. (ESI)

Steve Wray is a Senior Vice President and Principal at Econsult Solutions, Inc. (ESI). In this role, Steve focuses on the development and implementation of programs and projects that support ESI's vision and short- and long-term plans. He leads the work of the firm's principals and senior staff in developing new partnerships, expanding and building on existing practice areas, and integrating the firm's strengths in economic analysis and thought leadership. Mr. Wray joined ESI in 2017 as a Director and was promoted to Vice President, Strategic Initiatives in 2019.

Mr. Wray was executive director of the Economy League of Greater Philadelphia from 2006 through 2017. In addition to managing the strategy and operations for the \$1.6 million civic leadership organization, he led the development of the ground-breaking World Class Greater Philadelphia initiative, engaging regional leaders in scenario planning and strategy teams to build a long-term agenda and projects for economic growth and opportunity for the tri-state region. He was one of the founding partners of Pre-K for PA, a statewide coalition focused on increasing access to high-quality pre-kindergarten and created the Metropolitan Caucus to convene the county elected officials of Southeastern Pennsylvania.

From 2008 to 2017, Mr. Wray also served as Managing Director of the statewide Pennsylvania Economy League, Inc., where he was responsible for oversight of the activities and finances for the three Economy League offices in Philadelphia, Wilkes-Barre and Pittsburgh.

Mr. Wray was the deputy director and director of research from 1995 to 2006 for the Economy League in Philadelphia. He led numerous major initiatives, including analyses of the region's healthcare, arts and higher education industries; strategic analysis of Penn's West Philadelphia economic development strategy; a feasibility study of Philadelphia's potential to host the Olympics; and numerous economic impact and regional development projects. He also created and managed IssuesPA, a first-of its kind political communications campaign that was recognized both in the state and nationally as a cutting-edge political education effort.

Mr. Wray served as policy director for PA Lt. Governor and Acting Governor Mark Singel from 1992-1995 and as an investment research associate for the real estate firm Jones Lang Wootton from 1989 to 1991.

Mr. Wray is Chair of the Health Care Improvement Foundation and serves on the Boards of the Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Mercer Museum/Fonthill Castle. He also was appointed to be a member of the Governor's Early Learning Investment Commission.

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Agenda is subject to change

Opening Keynote Presentation: The Future of Pennsylvania Cities & Communities

This panel is being assembled to include a diverse group of panelists from across a variety of places, who will speak to the depth of economic development challenges and opportunities Pennsylvania communities are experiencing during the economic recovery. The session will also address plans for remaining competitive in the future, including the year ahead. Panelists will highlight their experiences in planning for a resilient recovery from different perspectives that may include government, institutions, the private sector and nonprofits. During this interactive session, the ESI Center for the Future of Cities, a new thought leadership initiative out of Econsult Solutions, Inc., will release key findings from a months-long research initiative on the topic and will spotlight innovative economic developers from across Pennsylvania.

The Creative Sector as a Driver of Economic Development

Especially in the wake of the pandemic, and the acceleration of remote work, communities that support creative sector assets and entrepreneurs will be more competitive for retaining and attracting creative workers and vibrant cultural and commercial districts. Communities have creative sector assets and talented artists who can help shape the economic, social, and physical character of their communities. But, many communities miss opportunities to fully leverage their creative sector assets. This session is about harnessing the creative sector advantage for your community.

This session will provide real world examples of how creative businesses, entrepreneurs, community spaces, cross-sector partners, and signature events are used to promote economic opportunity, activate underutilized spaces, and drive a positive community brand.

Takeaways: Attendees will leave with an understanding of resources for employing creative sector strategies in their communities and specific programs and financial resources available to them.

Specific examples include the Creative Communities Initiative; Creative Entrepreneur Accelerator Program, and the Creative Business Loan Fund, each of which provide information, technical assistance, and grants to support a strong entrepreneurial ecosystem and tools for advancing community and economic development goals.

Presentation approach: The Session moderator will unpack case studies of Pennsylvania communities that demonstrate innovative approaches to leveraging creative sector strategies, including the promotion of a robust creative entrepreneur ecosystem and improving the physical and social characteristics of a community.

After an interactive Q&A discussion about case studies, presenters will outline information, technical assistance, and existing financial resources available to every community to advance creative sector strategies.

Advocacy 101

Through established relationships with the Administration, Pennsylvania Legislators and other decision makers, PEDA continues its efforts to ensure that economic development remains at the forefront of Pennsylvania's agenda. Join us for this session, presented by Alex Rahn, Vice President of Wanner Associates and PEDA Government Affairs Consultant, to learn about why you should become an advocate, the basics of the legislative process, advocacy strategies and tools, etc.

Exploring the New & Improved SBA 504 Refinance Program

The US Small Business Administration issued revised guidelines in mid-2021 to the 504 refinance program. Learn more about this impactful economic development financing tool that consolidates debt, extends loan terms and reduces borrowing costs. Information expected to be covered includes the following.

- Detailed overview of the SBA 504 refinance program
 - Eligible borrowers
 - Eligible projects
 - Bank participation
 - Terms, rate, general structure
 - Application process
- Structures
 - Straight refi and cash out
 - Examples
- Vetting for Viability
 - Tips for economic development finance professionals
 - Information CEDOs should collect to aid CDC vetting
 - Green and red flags

Industrial Hemp 101: An Introduction to the Industry

The mission of Hemp 101, created by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture and the PA Hemp Steering Committee, is to reintroduce the Commonwealth's stakeholders to a burgeoning industry that thrived in 18th and 19th Century Pennsylvania, fell into obscurity after WWII and is now returning to its rightful place in Pennsylvania's agricultural mix, in the 21st Century.

The goal is to share knowledge, educate the uninitiated, inspire innovative investments for processors and other stakeholders and form transformative partnerships for farmers and industrialists alike, in Pennsylvania's hemp industry.

Phase I Environmental Site Assessment Update

As of November 2021, a new Phase I Environmental Site Assessment standard has been issued by the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM), which modifies the way due diligence is conducted. These new changes are intended to assess risk to occupants of new and existing structures from the release of hazardous materials into the environment by providing a systematic way to investigate properties for contamination. This presentation explains the changes to the standard, and explains the process, cost, reporting, and scheduling, as they relate to those involved in the due diligence process.

- Understand the new ASTM standards for researching historical use of a property.

- Understand how these changes will play out in the real world: recognizing changes may warrant more time and/or cost needed for environmental due diligence.
- Understand the new Phase I ASTM standards for identifying and addressing significant data gaps encountered in the environmental due diligence process and what that could mean to property purchases.
- Understand the revisions to the definition of REC (Recognized Environmental Condition), CREC (Controlled Recognized Environmental Condition), and HREC (Historical Recognized Environmental Condition).
- Understand key guidance for economic development practitioners involved in property development or redevelopment, property purchases or sales, financing, refinancing, etc. What should they look for? When should they require further investigation?
- Discuss how the environmental due diligence process impacts site selection and costs associated with property development, real or potential costs, based on the Phase I process.

Get Some Help!

We need to know. What best practices would you like others to share? Are external items affecting your work? What is troubling you at work or keeping you up at night? Is there anything that you need help sorting out? In short, this session will be built upon thought-provoking questions, ideas and opportunities for collaboration. The goal is to have a lively discussion, provide potential solutions and get / give some help.

Legislative Panel

This session will feature panelists who are deeply involved in the day-to-day efforts to develop and pass state legislation pertinent to economic development. In assembling this speaker lineup, efforts were made to secure key House and Senate legislative committee chairs to discuss current affairs, the upcoming state budget and economic development policies under consideration.

Closing Keynote Presentation: Kickstarting Your Economy Through Resilient Growth Strategies

Brian will explain how communities with an extended trendlines of population and employment loss can compete in community and economic development using new strategies such as remote worker attraction, quality of place enhancements, and augmentation of housing supply. In this session Brian will highlight his recently completed Economic Resiliency Plan project in the Southern Alleghenies Region while also highlighting recent experience in the western and southern United States.