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Alloway applauds Waynesboro's progress

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WAYNESBORO, Pa. — State Sen. Richard Alloway toured Waynesboro's downtown Monday to learn more about an equipment purchase and rent rebate grant program that officials say is the first of its kind in the state and, possibly, the nation.

Alloway met business owners and peeked inside two commercial spaces under construction on Main Street. His predecessor in office, retired state Sen. Terry Punt, launched the downtown business incentive grant in June 2006, to fund rent rebates, percentages of property purchases and equipment purchases in hopes of attracting new businesses.

Alloway also saw how other grants are being used to improve the facades of several buildings. His tour guides from Main Street Waynesboro Inc. and the Greater Waynesboro Chamber of Commerce showed him how brick sidewalks, a reconfigured Center Square and Victorian-style traffic light poles will continue to change downtown's appearance.

Alloway, R-Franklin/Adams/York, remarked how small touches seem to be making a big difference, but he said consumers might be stuck in their habits and not fully aware of the good businesses downtown.

He acknowledged that the state's Main Street program, which supports community revitalization, was cut in a budget proposal passed by the Pennsylvania Senate recently. However, he said compromises will be reached after the Democrat-controlled House presents its ideas.

State Sen. Rich Alloway, left, joins Carlene Willhide and Bruce Dreisbach in listening to Peter Galifianakis talk about plans for his new restaurant, Waynesburger. Willhide is executive director of the Greater Waynesboro Chamber of Commerce and Dreisbach is manager of Main Street Waynesboro Inc. Galifianakis is partnering with the business' owner/operator, Solomon Contreras. **(Credit: By Jennifer Fitch / Staff Writer)**

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Main Street Waynesboro Inc. Manager Bruce Dreisbach talks about a downtown walking tour held Monday in Waynesboro, Pa. **(Credit: Jennifer Fitch / Reporter)**

Waynesboro's downtown revitalization continues to be a top priority, Alloway said.

Alloway's first stop was Zoe's Chocolate, where he purchased chocolate-covered almonds. He saw the kitchen equipment purchased through grants and noted how the facade was upgraded, although everyone in the group expressed concern about a weed-filled alley on the building's west side.

Weeds growing in mulch under Main Street shade trees also caught the senator's attention, and Harry

Morningstar Jr. from Main Street Waynesboro Inc. explained that ivy is being planted to hide the problem. Next, Bruce Dreisbach, manager of the same organization, answered questions about redevelopment of the old Sheetz, saying environmental testing is under way to ensure the soil is clean.

Alloway praised the appearance of the block with F&M Trust bank and St. Andrew Catholic Church. He also commented on the quality of food at Adventures in Coffee.

Dreisbach showed Alloway where the public restrooms are at borough hall and said they're a great asset for shoppers. However, he said the bathrooms being locked in the evening is a problem.

"I worked for Sen. Punt in (borough hall), and I didn't even know they were there," Alloway said.

On the tour, Greater Waynesboro Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Carlene Willhide saw the white lines painted on sidewalks for the first time. The lines mark the division between borough-owned and privately owned portions of the sidewalk, and bricks being installed soon might only fill the borough-owned part.

"We can't do this," Willhide said as she talked about the potential combination of brick and concrete sidewalks.

Alloway pointed out two of his big concerns — the facades of the Waynesboro Movie Theatre and former John Wallace Kitchen. Morningstar said investor Paul Gunder will start construction on the former John Wallace Kitchen building within two weeks and has long-term plans for the theater.

Peter Galifianakis welcomed the senator to the future home of Waynesburger at the intersection of West Main and Potomac streets. He talked about the fresh produce and meats he wants to use at the restaurant.

"I want to fatten you up," Galifianakis said, inviting Alloway to the restaurant's opening, anticipated to be in late June.

MZeigler — General Contractor LLC, is opening next to Waynesburger and might build a deck for outdoor restaurant seating. Proprietor Michelle Zeigler showed the senator her showroom at 106 W. Main St., which is under construction.

"I want people to feel like they're home," she said, explaining how the showroom is being set up like a kitchen and dining room.

Morningstar wants to hold a ceremony in October to celebrate improvements made downtown, including the construction project on Center Square. He asked Alloway to invite Gov. Ed Rendell, although Morningstar said he wants to "shoot for Mars" and invite President Barack Obama as well.

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