

Contact: Katya Spear
Managing Director, Mayors Innovation Project
knspaer@mayorsinnovation.org, 608-262-5831

Contact: Chris Hughes
Communication and Information Manager, City of Scranton, PA
chughes@scrantonpa.gov

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Scranton Hosts Mayors Innovation Project Summer 2023 Meeting



SCRANTON, Pa. - This week, August 9th-11th, Mayor Paige G. Cagnetti welcomed city representatives, policy experts, and over 30 mayors from across the United States to Scranton for the Mayors Innovation Project (MIP) Summer 2023 Meeting. MIP is a national peer learning network for mayors, and MIP meetings provide a space for mayors and their trusted advisors to share policy solutions that mayors can take home and implement in their own cities.

The Summer 2023 Meeting included sessions on the City's role in improving private sector job quality, transitioning to an EV fleet, increasing fiscal transparency and community trust, and ensuring tenant protections and rental housing quality. In addition to sharing policy solutions, mayors and attendees had opportunities to explore the City and learn about its history and recent innovations.

"We've worked with the Mayors Innovation Project to put together an agenda that will inspire, educate, connect, and entertain. It's our goal to send you home with a few new ideas you can begin to implement right away," said Mayor Cagnetti of the event.

The meeting began Wednesday evening with a reception and dinner at the Backyard Ale House. Thursday morning, the mayors were joined by Pennsylvania Senators Bob Casey and John Fetterman. Sen. Casey, a Scranton-native, and Sen. Fetterman, the former mayor of Braddock, Pa., offered welcoming remarks and words of encouragement and wisdom to city leaders, while praising the leadership of Mayor Cagnetti. Said Sen. Casey, "I'm just grateful for her willingness to lead in a really difficult job in a difficult time for our city, for our Commonwealth, for our country. So mayor, thank you for your leadership here in Scranton."

To all the mayors in the room, Sen. Casey shared, "I'm not sure that there's a position in any level of government that is more personally connected to the lives of the people that each of us serves than a mayor. You are there in triumph and tragedies. You're there in late nights and

early mornings and every time in between. You're there to celebrate and to mourn. You're there to lift up and to try to put a community back together when things aren't going well."

Sen. Fetterman picked up on this theme. "As a former mayor, I miss a lot of that. I miss being connected to people, I miss being connected to problems that you can work on very directly, that it's not about your committees, that you're just one vote," Fetterman said. "It's something very special and...truthfully, being a mayor has been the most satisfying and gratifying part of my political career, you know, in public service right now too."

After panels covering the city's role in driving private sector job quality and best practices for transitioning the city fleet to electric vehicles, attendees had the opportunity to tour Scranton, including the historic Lackawanna County Coal Mine, the Anthracite Heritage Museum, Scranton's Pine Brook Neighborhood, and Lace Village redevelopment.



Thursday evening, during a reception at the historic Ritz Theater, mayors took to the stage to participate in the Innovation Showcase. The Showcase is a beloved staple of Mayors Innovation Project Meetings where mayors have just three minutes to share a good idea, policy, program, or practice they've implemented in their city. This meeting's Showcase featured innovative projects ranging from retrofitting municipal buildings with geothermal energy, to electric motorcycles for police, to free summer city bus passes for public school children, and city-wide low cost internet access.



Thursday evening concluded with a keynote address from former mayor of Ithaca, N.Y. and current President of People for the American Way, Svante Myrick, who blended stories of his past and current role, concluding with a directive for mayors and city leaders in the room to work passionately in their roles toward a greater, more democratic future. "If we could remember that a world full of injustices does not excuse any one particular injustice. Just because life wasn't fair

for us as kids doesn't mean these kids need to suffer. Just because nobody fixed it before doesn't mean it can't be fixed," Myrick said.

Friday morning concluded with panel sessions on increasing community trust and fiscal health through transparency and to tenant protections for renters. Between sessions, attendees stretched their legs with a walking tour of the historic Iron Furnaces.

Friday evening, after the conference's conclusion, some meeting attendees boarded a 1907 trolley to PNC Field to watch the Scranton Wilkes-Barre RailRiders take on the Syracuse Mets, a close game won ultimately by the RailRiders 8-7.

The Mayors Innovation Project is grateful to Mayor Cignetti and the City of Scranton for hosting a memorable, informative, and fun event. "Mayors work hard every day in service of their community. We aim to create spaces for them to share, learn, develop, and play in a way that allows them to return to their communities with new ideas and the energy and partners to put them into practice," said MIP Managing Director Katya Spear.