

Business leaders say Robert Duffy would be advocate for upstate

Matthew Daneman • Staff writer • May 27, 2010

Rochester's loss of a mayor would be Rochester's gain of an upstate advocate in one of the highest posts in Albany. That was the consensus of some local business leaders regarding the selection of Robert Duffy to run for lieutenant governor.

"There's no question having someone in Albany at any level who understands the issues upstate is going to be a boon for all upstate cities," said Heidi Zimmer-Meyer, president of the Rochester Downtown Development Corp. "And Bob Duffy is a real student of urban development. He understands these things.

"What we need to be about is finding someone who has the passion and has the respect and people wanting to work closely with him to move into the mayor's spot," Zimmer-Meyer said. "We can't say this is just a placeholder until 2013," when Duffy's current term expires.

Duffy would add "a loud voice, a powerful voice" for upstate in general and Rochester in particular, said Rochester Business Alliance CEO Sandy Parker.

Since assuming office in January 2006, the Duffy administration's business and economic development work has included a focus on downtown redevelopment.

"With Bob, we had a known quantity, and we know he was very pro-business," said real estate developer Neil Bauman, who owns property at Main Street and Clinton Avenue. "I'm extremely apprehensive about ... who fills the void and what their mind-set is."

The Duffy administration, like the Bill Johnson administration before it, has been cooperative and accommodating to business, said Patrick Ho, whose Rochester Optical chain includes a Lyell Avenue

retail outlet and adjacent factory.

"The problem is more the state of New York," Ho said. "The tax burden is way too high, the regulatory environment is anti-business. If there's anything Duffy can do ..."

MDANEMAN@DemocratandChronicle.com

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