

sept, 2003  
vol. 7, no. 7



HarborCountry®

Chamber of Commerce  
&  
Lodging Association

Connection  
the monthly newsletter

## Chamber, NB City meet in first series of talks

The Harbor Country Chamber of Commerce has taken a bold step forward in opening lines of communication with the eight communities that are home for its membership. On August 21, the Chamber Board of Directors, members and officers of the New Buffalo Business Association (NBBA), members of the New Buffalo Business Improvement District (BID) and representatives of New Buffalo City, met at the Harbor Grand Hotel for the first in a series of discussions with area governmental units.

Under the leadership of chamber president Don Jackson, the board of directors has undertaken the mission of talking to each of the governmental bodies under the umbrella of Harbor Country. This would include the City of New Buffalo, New Buffalo Township, Chikaming Township, Village of Three Oaks, Three Oaks Township, Village of Michiana and Village of Grand Beach.

Representing New Buffalo City at this first meeting were Councilmen Mark Wojdula and Rusty Geisler, city manager Tom Johnson and Mayor Jack Kennedy.

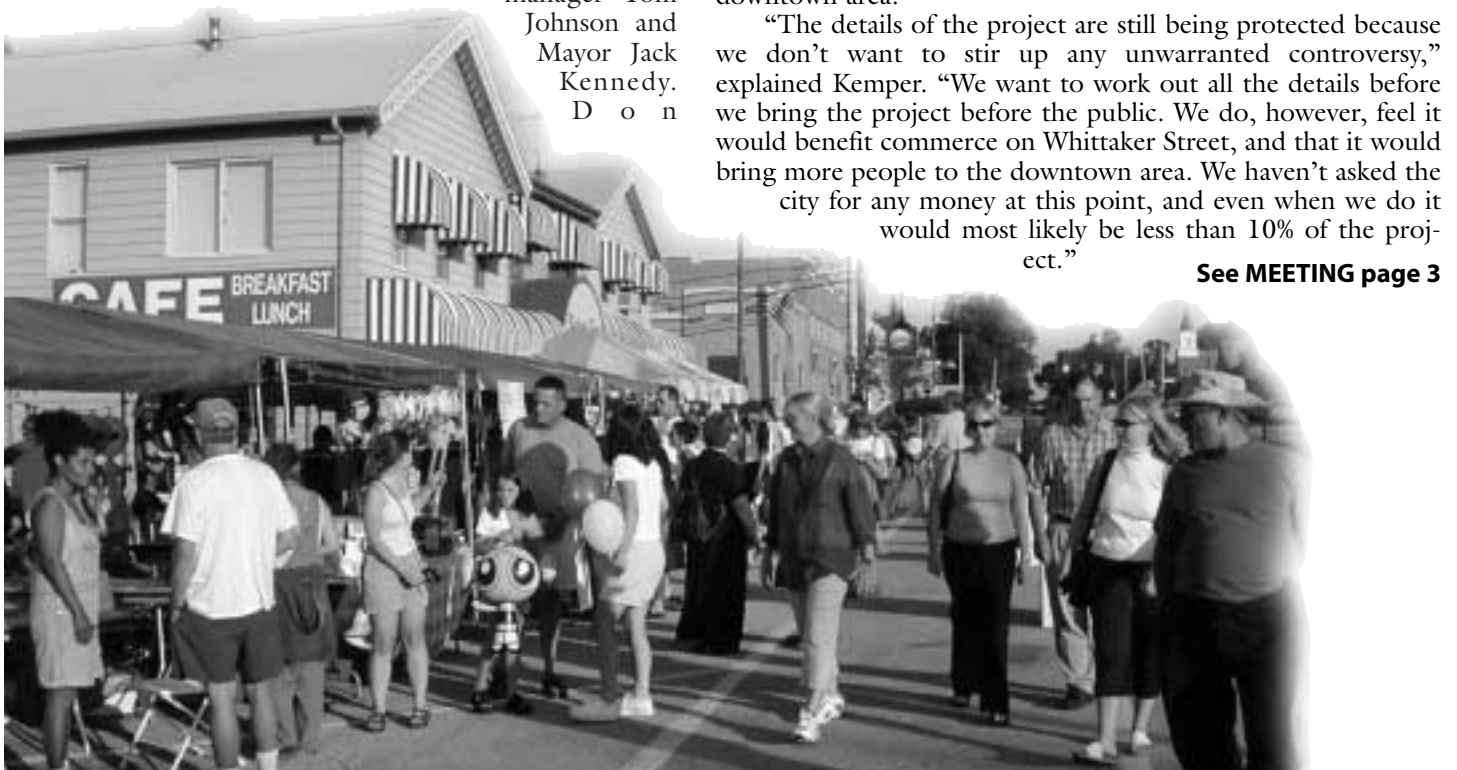
Jackson opened the meeting saying, "We hear that the city doesn't do this or that when it comes to dealing with local business. We're here today because we need better communication between all community groups."

"We certainly want to work with the community," responded Mayor Kennedy. "Our concern to you is that we hear one thing from one group and get a request from another group. Maybe the chamber could represent all the splinter groups."

One group working within the city to implement changes for the business district is BID. The committee consists of Robert Kemper, Jim Reimann, Ivan Bloom, Gary Ramberg and Ron Farina. City manager Tom Johnson is a regular at the meetings. Kemper explained that initially the group was formed to purchase land for a park (where the old Lighthouse Restaurant was located), then it hoped to purchase land for parking near Stray Dog, but both of these ventures were thwarted when the properties in question were purchased by private developers. Now BID is looking at a comprehensive streetscape plan for the downtown area.

"The details of the project are still being protected because we don't want to stir up any unwarranted controversy," explained Kemper. "We want to work out all the details before we bring the project before the public. We do, however, feel it would benefit commerce on Whittaker Street, and that it would bring more people to the downtown area. We haven't asked the city for any money at this point, and even when we do it would most likely be less than 10% of the project."

See MEETING page 3





**Harbor Country®  
Chamber of Commerce**  
Don Jackson, *President*

**Board of Directors:**  
Don Jackson, President  
Michael Hojnacki, Vice-President  
Karen Gear, Treasurer

**Board Members:**  
Margaret Anderson  
Marti Arney  
A.J. Boggio  
Roger Harvey  
John Nelson  
Gary Ramberg  
Kathy Snyder  
Ray Vasquez  
Joan Zonka



**Harbor Country®  
Lodging Association**

AJ Boggio, *President*  
**Board of Directors:**  
AJ Boggio, President  
Lisa Werner, Vice-President  
Jerry Welsh, Co-Treasurer

**Board Members:**  
Liz Thomas  
John Natsis  
Lynn O'Hara  
Robert Kemper

**Harbor Country® Chamber of  
Commerce and Lodging Association**

530 South Whittaker Street, Suite F  
New Buffalo, Michigan 49117  
269-469-5409; fax 269-469-2257  
email: harborcountry@triton.net  
website: www.harborcountry.org

## NBBA putting tourney aids scholarship fund

The 4th annual New Buffalo Business Association (NBBA) Tom Ray Memorial Golf Tournament held at Diamond Bowl Miniature Golf on August 14 brought out area business foursomes dedicated to the pursuit of sophisticated sportsmanship. In a contest played in a light drizzle the team from The Fig Leaf proved to be the victors with a net score of 163 and the lowest individual score of 38 by Greg Jones and the a tie for second lowest score by Sarah Williams at 39. Fellow teammates included Rafal Golebiewski and Chalee Lewis.

The second place from Brewster's was narrowly defeated with their net score of 165. Forest Tucker posted the

third lowest individual score at 40. Other team members included Scott Campbell, Steve Voorhees and Steve Stryuf.

Third place Puttin Heads was lead by Mike DeFrancesco who tied Williams for second place individual low score. The team was rounded out by Nora Duffy, Amanda Asch and Gregg Bubb.

Nobody won the hole-in-one contest. Ron Oselka took home \$151 in the 50-50 raffle.

The biggest winner, however, has got to be New Buffalo High School student who will be awarded a \$1,000 scholarship by the NBBA in 2004. This year's recipient was Bill Covert. The group raised \$1,500 with this event. Twenty-two area businesses contributed.



PUTTIN' FOR SOMTHIN'- Top team at the 4th annual Tom Ray Memorial Golf Tournament was Fig Leaf featuring Chalee Lewis, Greg James, Sarah Williams and Rafal Golebiewski.

## Harvest Fest set for October 11-12

In an effort to organize autumn activity, the Chamber and Lodging, NBBA, TOBA and Red Arrow and Sawyer businesses have teamed up for the 1st annual Harvest Days on October 11 and 12 (with one activity on Oct. 13.

Fifty-two businesses will be participating in the celebration. Some will present demonstrations, lectures and shows

especially for the weekend. Others will host activities such as pumpkin carving for the youngsters and the young at heart. Most of the businesses will participate in the Scarecrow Decorating Contest.

Though it's too late to tag onto the publicity, members can call Sue Harsch at the Office for more details.

## Online ads back on line

At the end of July we temporarily suspended advertising on the Chamber's web site while we made the transition to the new version and re-install the ad distribution software. That process has been completed and we are now accepting sponsorship web site ads.

For those newer members unfamiliar with the program, we offer Internet ads on the Chamber's site at extremely affordable rates, giving you worldwide exposure for a fraction of the cost of print advertising. The testimonials we have received from advertising members tell us that these online ads have been

effective in generating new business and sales.

While the format on the new version of the site is a less cluttered, cleaner appearance, particularly on the Home page, we have allowed for available ad space on the business directory pages (Dining, Lodging, Shopping, Services, etc.) that have consistently received high levels of visitor traffic.

Now is your opportunity to get additional exposure to your web site as we look ahead to the slower off-season months. The Chamber and Lodging Association's investment in marketing

and online partnerships have resulting in a high level of visitor traffic, which translates to increased visibility to member listings, and ads displayed on the site. There are several ad sizes and price ranges available to in-area members in good standing. If you are unsure of where to advertise on the Internet, you can start with a trial purchase of a \$25/year hyperlink subscription, which enhances your Chamber listing with a link to your site plus a 30 word description. For more information on these programs, contact the Chamber office at 269-469-5409 for details.

**SEE INSERT FOR ALL THE DETAILS ABOUT ONLINE ADVERTISING ON OUR WEBSITE!**

### MEETING from page 3

"That's one of the complaints we get," said Jackson. "We can use tax revenue for residential improvements, but we have to charge businesses for their improvements."

Referring to a previous attempt to form a Downtown Development Authority in New Buffalo, Tom Johnson said that most people felt it would only help the businesses and do nothing for them. He also addressed a misconception people have about the amount of tax money the city receives.

"We get 26%," he said. "The biggest chunk goes elsewhere. We can't levy a local option sales tax, we can't levy a hotel tax, we mostly rely on the property tax to provide services. Those costs continue to go up every year. At the end of the year we don't have all that much left over, and people continually come to us asking if we could do this or that project. Frankly, we can't."

Kemper said that the main reason for not revealing all the plans for the

BID was to garner more impact when it is finally presented. "We want something we can sell to the local public," he said. "We want to show that it won't affect their pocketbooks, but that it would impact our businesses in a good way. We want to develop the project so that there will also be plenty of room for feedback."

Rusty Geisler brought up the point that many local residents liked New Buffalo as it was. "It's not the quaint little town any more. As you look at development, you need to find a balance with year round businesses as well."

Kemper said that hopefully the plans developed by BID would become a model for future plans in New Buffalo as well as in other communities. He suggested that the city form a strategy to earmark monies from increased property values for specific projects. "It would show our businesses you were behind them if you could target taxes from increased property values to develop-

ment projects."

Geisler said that the trouble with increased development is the fact that the city then needs more fire trucks and police to deal with it.

Mark Wojdula told Kemper that he agreed with him to a certain extent. "When I ran for office I said that we needed a plan and then when I got elected and saw all the problems that confront a city government it became a whole different story."

Johnson told the group that the city needed suggestions in order to plan for them. Jackson said the chamber didn't have anything specific.

"How can we target money if we can't find the target," questioned Mayor Kennedy. "You have to let us know what you're thinking so that we can determine how we can help."

"I guess this is the start," said Jackson.

"We're all in this movie together," added Tom Johnson. "Planning needs to be there so we don't ruin this community for the next generation."

Kemper said that if one group could communicate across the lines of all the area governments it would be the Harbor Country Chamber of Commerce with its over 400 members.

Hollis Oselka from the NBBA told the group that everyone needed to work together in this effort. "We need to plan the course ourselves or else outsiders will do it for us. Working together See **MORE MEETING** next page

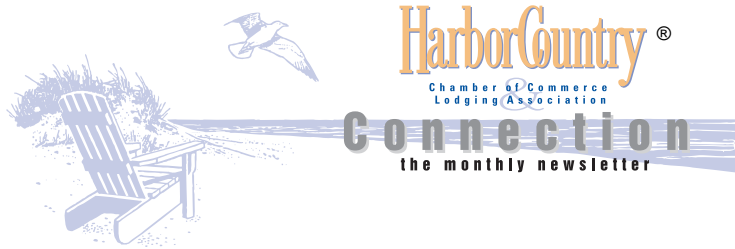
#### Harbor Country® Connection

Harbor Country Connection is published once a month by the Harbor Country Chamber of Commerce and the Harbor Country Lodging Association, 530 South Whittaker Street, Suite F, New Buffalo, Michigan 49117 and is distributed to its membership through the U.S. Postal Service. Additional copies are available at the office. DEADLINE for all editorial matter is the 20th of each month for publication in the following month's issue. COPY may be sent via fax, e-mail, or regular mail to:

#### Artistic Energy Group, Inc.

P.O. Box 6, Three Oaks, MI 49128  
Fax: 269-756-9071 • Voice: 269-756-9070  
email ~ mhojnacki@triton.net  
Michael & Marisue Hojnacki, Editors

**FINE PRINT:** Though every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of stories and information in this publication, the Harbor Country Chamber of Commerce, Harbor Country Lodging Association, their respective Boards of Directors, and the editors of the Harbor Country Connection are not responsible for errors or misinformation in copy submitted by any organization or group.



BULK RATE  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
UNION PIER, MI  
49129  
PERMIT NO. 7

530 south whittaker street, suite f, new buffalo, mi 49117

**CITY MEETS  
CHAMBER**

**PUTTING  
FOR PRETTY**

**ONLINE ADS  
ARE BACK**

page 4 harbor country connection.....september, 2003

**MORE MEETING** from page 3

means the city, township, chamber, NBBA and interested citizens. We want this to be our place. That's why people come here."

Tom Johnson asked if the chamber could delineate a long-term economic growth outlook. "Where do you, the business community see this community in the next couple of years, the next decade."

Jack Kennedy told the group that the best time to plant an oak tree is 20 years ago. "The best time to plant the seed for the future is today," he said. "Let us know what you need and want. We're open to your suggestions. We just need definition."

Tom Johnson said that the chamber could be the catalyst for encouraging community cooperation. He encouraged a unified voice.

Kemper suggested that the chamber form a PAC (Political Action Committee) that spoke to area governments about business concerns. "If one group could handle this it would be an asset to the area," he said. "We have

lacked the resources to convince people of economic opportunities. One of the biggest tools for our economic development might be the promotional dollars from the Lodging Association. Another tool is the new website that the chamber and lodging have invested in. It profiles Harbor Country. It says what's so great about us."

Upon closing the meeting everyone felt that communication lines had been freshly opened. They agreed that there was no reason not to talk about what was on their minds. They also agreed that those lines of communication had to be opened with all the area governments.

"It's kind of weird because we don't have an ax to grind or anything," said Jackson after the meeting. "We just want to talk. We just want the governments to know that we're all in this together and that we're willing to lend a hand, offer our advice, and get behind a well-thought plan."

Next stop: New Buffalo Township.

**new  
members  
needed  
2003**

*Have a new business neighbor?*

*Why not ask them to join the Chamber of Commerce? It's a great way to meet fellow business people, enjoy the group benefits of health insurance, and play a vital role in our economic future.*

*The Chamber and Lodging Association have upgraded the harborcountry.org website to allow better navigation, offer a deeper look into the people, places and events that are the background of this area, and to get your marketing message to millions of people world-wide.*

*This is the time to "plant an oak tree" if we expect to influence the coming generations in Harbor Country. Call the Office at 269-469-5409 for membership details.*

