



Chamber and Lodging strike new JOA agreement

CHAMBER BULLETIN BOARD

READY FOR CHRISTMAS

Harbor Country Christmas "Magical Saturdays 2004" will begin Nov. 20th and continue each Saturday through Dec. 18th. Events include gallery walks in Three Oaks, the annual Chamber house walk, tree lightings, Santa arrivals, parades, Toys for Tots, cookie walk and a Teddy Bear Tea.

GUIDE SAVINGS

There is still time to save on your guide advertising. The Early, Early Deadline could have saved you 10% off last year's rates. (Well, you missed that deadline.) You can still get 5% off with the Early Deadline set for December 15 at 5 p.m. After that you'll be paying the new rate for 2005. Still a good deal, dollar for dollar, considering the market it reaches- 75,000 tourists. Call Sue at the office for details 469-5409.

WE GOT GAME

The Chamber is partnering with New Buffalo Fine Arts and the Southwest Michigan Symphony Orchestra in selling the board game-- HARBORCOUNTRYPOLY. Details on page 4.

The Harbor Country Chamber of Commerce and the Harbor Country Lodging Association have found common ground for a new Joint Operating Agreement (JOA). This document that had expired two years ago and continued as a gentleman's agreement was renegotiated throughout 2004.

The original agreement, drafted in 1998, and signed in 1999 provided financial support for the then fledgling Lodging Association by offering the revenues of the annual Harbor Country Chamber of Commerce Guide. That money was earmarked for marketing purposes outside of the area.

Upon review of the mission statements of both Lodging and the Chamber, the Chamber leadership decided it was time to revamp the JOA.

"Times and circumstances had changed since the document was first drawn up," explained 2003-04 Chamber President Michael Hojnacki. "Both groups have been evolving over the years and when looking at the future, especially from the chamber's viewpoint, we needed to make some adjustments."

A revised JOA was presented to the Lodging Association in May that called for an equal share of expenses for the web site, office, and trademark expenses, as well as more money from the guide revenues staying with the chamber for their own marketing purposes. That agreement was turned down by the lodging board and the chamber executive committee felt that it was time for an even more radical approach-- maybe going our own way.

A redraft of the JOA was presented at the July meeting of the Chamber

Board with members of the Lodging Association present. Hojnacki read a lengthy statement that suggested the Chamber and Lodging Associations go their own separate ways. After much discussion, it was resolved to form a steering committee to iron out the differences and work on an agreement both parties could accept. A new agreement was reached and signed on October 18.

The new agreement gives Lodging more control over the tourism and chamber office located at 530 South Whittaker Street in New Buffalo. More importantly, it provides \$15,000 of the guide profits to be used by the Chamber for marketing. Lodging will continue to market the area to Chicago, Fort Wayne, Grand Rapids, Detroit and other regional locations. The Chamber will use its funds to market locally, especially to nearby communities such as Michigan City, St. Joseph, South Bend, and LaPorte.

"We need to create an awareness for Harbor Country in our own backyard," said Hojnacki. "All too often when talking to people in our neighboring communities you get this 'deer in the headlights' look when mentioning Harbor Country. That's not good." A new marketing strategy will be targeted to correct this and improve the visibility of the Harbor Country area.

"This agreement helps continue the good working relationship these two organizations share," said Lodging president AJ Boggio. "It allows both of us to better plan for the future of Harbor Country."

Both groups realize that by working together they can create a unique and viable community for the local citizenry, second homeowners and visitors.

l e a d e r s h i p

i n s i d e y o u r c h a m b e r



Harbor Country®
Chamber of Commerce

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Diane Botica, Vice-President
Serves on the Marketing Committee

John Nelson, Treasurer
Business Watch Coordinator

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Newly Installed

Jackie Sexton
Newly Installed

Janet Clark
Newly Installed

A.J. Boggio
Former President, Serves on Internet
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Ray Vasquez
Chair of Internet/Online Services

Joan Zonka
Chair of the Harbor Country Road
Initiative

Chuck Garasic
Chair of Community Development
Co-chair of Guide Committee

Patty Prino
Chair of Member Services

Mike Hojnacki
Immediate Past President
Chair of the Marketing Committee

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Chamber of Commerce**
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It's a matter of evolution

By Michael Hojnacki, Immediate Past President

I guess I have an opportunity to get in a last word. Or is it the first word? That's a conundrum of the evolutionary process-- half the time you don't know if you are coming or going, but you know when you get there it's going to be a better place.

Your chamber evolved this past year. I use that term because it encompasses all the possibilities and reasonings for why things happened this past year when they didn't happen any time sooner.

I suppose I could use the term "growing pains," but that would be a misnomer for a chamber because a chamber revels in growth. Would you say "...Oh dear, I'm experiencing growing pains..." after a surge in third quarter profits? Heck no! You'd be hopping, skipping and smiling all the way to the bank.

Evolution on the other hand, does involve some pain. We have to relinquish old mannerisms, old structures, old rules, old everything and embody the new, exciting and adventuresome. It's hard to let go and it's scary to move in new directions, but the process of evolution dictates just that. We have to stop breathing in water, shed our gills, and breathe on land. That's evolution in a nutshell.

This year time caught up with the chamber and we seriously evolved. First, we rewrote and approved new by-laws (copies are available at the office). Nothing extraordinary, but definitely up to date. For example, we added language about our registered trademark, we reviewed the processes of nominated officers and directors, and we restructured our standing committees. We had been talking about doing this for at least two years. Now, it's done.

We also spent the year working on a

Joint Operating Agreement (JOA) with the Harbor Country Lodging Association (See Front Page story). It was a sensible agreement on the surface in that the chamber and lodging shared common expenses for common services, especially the tourist information center and office in New Buffalo. Other shared expenses include the maintenance of the website and the protection of our trademark. It also provided money for marketing Harbor Country outside the area.

It wasn't that there was something wrong with the agreement, but it didn't always sit right with the chamber's mission of promoting all its businesses. As we analyzed the agreement over many months we realized that the chamber needs to promote itself locally to attract more members and define its existence to the current membership. The chamber also needs to promote itself to our immediate neighbors and suggest this area as a great place for daytripping. And the chamber needs to address our biggest economic contributors-- the second homeowners. Boy, did we drop the ball on all of these market niches.

The new JOA changes that. We will now have \$15,000 to direct a marketing effort to create awareness where it was lacking and to generate support where it was weak. The hope is that it will benefit retail, restaurant, construction, real estate and eventually all the other businesses within the chamber. Beyond the money, it has set the chamber on a new quest of involvement.

Another part of our evolution that has occurred over the past two years is getting involved in local issues, government decisions or lack thereof, our schools, the local job outlook, and year-round

See EVOLUTION page 3

Harbor Country®
Connection
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Do you really own your domain?

After investing much time and effort to acquire a web site domain for their business, developing and promoting the site pages, some domain owners have discovered to their dismay that their site belongs to someone else.

Sometimes this is an honest mistake, or a product of convenience, and other times the result of downright foxy maneuvering by 'technical support' personnel with questionable motives.

By no means do we suggest that you should be looking for such people under every bush, but it is always in your best interest to make sure you understand the implications of proper and improper domain registration.

Though the Chamber does not mediate issues or complaints in such matters, we have intersected with many such instances among our members. As a business owner, you may not have the

time or technical savvy to get involved in all the details behind the scenes on your web site. You may have even hired a service to either acquire a domain, or develop a site for you. But there could be very messy consequences (as we have witnessed) if you are not named as the "Registrant" for the domain you think is yours. The service you hired may have registered it under their name, perhaps as a matter of convenience or policy. But if this service goes out of business or leaves town, the domain is in jeopardy. It may take weeks, months or longer to get a domain back, that is, if in the process it is not renewed, and it goes up for grabs to someone else, or if the service you hired becomes unwilling to transfer it to your name.

To find out if you indeed own the web site domain you purchased, there are a number of domain registry servic-

es you can use to check it out. One of the oldest and most trusted service, Network Solutions www.netsol.com has a "WhoIs" link at the top of their site. Register.com (a newer service) also offers a similar service. Protect your domain ownership, and be sure you are, and insist that you are the named Registrant.

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affordable housing. I have the feeling that the chamber isn't going to stick its head in the sand any more. If an issue needs to be addressed, the chamber can lend or deny its support-- and the chamber SHOULD do just that! It's not always going to make everyone happy, but a chamber without backbone has no real purpose.

One of the final ways we evolved has to do with the way we communicate with our members and the public. This publication will no longer be published on a monthly basis. Instead, the Connection will be sent out quarterly-- Fall, Winter, Spring and Summer. It will include all the pertinent information needed to mark up your calendars, and it will give you a glimpse of what we have been doing. More importantly, the chamber will be more aggressive in distributing press releases about what's happening in Harbor Country, what's important to its members, and actions it might be supporting at the local level.

The chamber evolution seems like it was a long process, even though in real time it only took two years. But does evolution really start and stop? I'm thinking that it's an ongoing process peppered with spurts of creativity, fits of embarrassment and as many cowardly moments as there are brave ones. We have to take it all in stride. We have to

feel like we just slithered out of the primordial ooze and we're inhaling our very first breath of fresh air. Imagine the rush if we felt that way everyday of our life. This evolution-- it's a good thing.



Grand Beach Inn hosted a mixer to introduce the chamber to its remodeled facilities. Tim and Ted O'Neil flank partner Jay Koverman on the front porch of the inn. Members toured rooms, the new pool and guest house and sampled the cuisine prepared by Chef Diane Botica of Dinner's Ready.

new members

Catherine Doll Clothing
5844 Sawyer Road
Sawyer

Diane Giancaspro Photography
16219 First Lane
Union Pier

Kurt Hanes, MA, ED
205 Generations Drive
Three Oaks

Jill Underhill Gallery
13462 Red Arrow Hwy.
Harbert

Pobocik Funeral Home
106 E. Ash
Three Oaks

Lakeside Cabins
7650 Warren Woods Road
Three Oaks

Pete Rahm, Realtor with Keller-Williams
19 N. Whittaker Street
New Buffalo

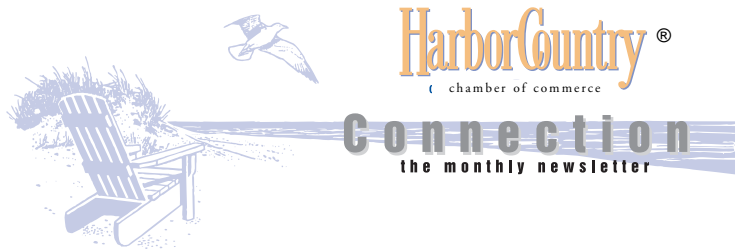
Mesa Luna Restaurant
13 South Elm
Three Oaks

The Drake Group- Lakeshore Cottages
16345 Lakeshore Road
Union Pier

LaPorte Herald Argus
701 State Street
LaPorte, IN

Lonbar Development, Ltd.
16272 Red Arrow Hwy.
Union Pier

Do you know a business that could add to the diversity of the Chamber of Commerce?
Everyone is welcome!
Call the Chamber office at 269-469-5409



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New Chamber leadership installed

The Harbor Country Chamber of Commerce installed new officers and directors on Thursday, Oct. 21, at Skip's Steakhouse. Michael Hojnacki transferred the duties of president to Karen Gear, 5/3 Bank. Diane Botica, Dinner's Ready, was named vice president. John Nelson, Lakeside Antiques, will be the treasurer.

New Board of Directors include Tim Gulley, Travel America in Sawyer; Jackie Sexton, ReMax Harbor Country

in Union Pier; and Janet Clark, Michigan Thyme in New Buffalo. Incumbent board members include Karen Gear and Chuck Garasic.

Leaving the chamber board were Margaret Anderson and Don Jackson, both with six years of service. Hojnacki will serve as Immediate Past President and one more year as a board member.

A special recognition was presented to the Sobecki Family, owners of Skip's, for 30 years of commitment to the area.

Get on board with HARBORCOUNTRY-OPOLY

You can make your presence known in Harbor Country by getting on the board of HARBORCOUNTRY-OPOLY, a board game similar to the popular Monopoly, but with a local twist.

The game is part of a three-way fundraiser to support the New Buffalo Fine Arts Council, the Southwest Michigan Symphony Orchestra (which provides performers for NB Fine Arts), and Chamber promotional programs.

The program was announced at the Chamber Installation Dinner, but it gets serious at a game place auction to be held on Thursday, 7 p.m., Nov. 11, at the Harbor Grand. This will be your chance to buy the prime locations on the board. Does somebody else want "Park Place" as much as you?" That's when the bidding starts. It should be a lot of fun and the money will go to a good cause. Patty Prino of Patty's Picks will explain the entire fund raising effort that evening.

NOV/DEC

NOV 11- HARBORCOUNTRY-OPOLY space auction at Harbor Grand, 7 p.m.

NOV 18-20- Food and Wine Classic A four-day celebration of food and libation including Winemaker Dinners, Blues and Brews, Sparkling Event, and Golden Muffin competition.

NOV 20- Harbor Country Gallery Walk

NOV 27- Santa arrives in New Buffalo, open houses, Toys for Tots, tree lighting.

DEC 4- Santa arrives in Three Oaks, floral and holiday trimming ideas in Sawyer, Breakfast with Santa at Hannah's in New Buffalo.

DEC 5- Harbor Country House Walk, starts at 1, supports local charities.

DEC 11- Cookie Walk, Shop 'til 8

DEC 12- Teddy Bear Tea, Harbor Grand

DEC 25- Christmas Day