

Bolton Chamber of Commerce

May 2023 Newsletter #2

Hello everyone!

We have been busy planning how to improve our Chamber and how to increase the value of your membership. This email summarizes the results of the survey we sent out earlier this year and includes what we are working on for the benefit of our members and our community. Heidi

Strategic Plan – The Bolton Chamber Directors met in January to discuss several areas of interest as well as issues in our community that effect our members. We created a survey which was distributed to members and prospective members in February and March. We sought input on:

- the value of membership in the Bolton Chamber and how to increase it
- Chamber communications
- Chamber activities and events
- Business staffing needs
- Lack of Affordable housing for employees in Bolton
- Lack of Licensed Child Care in Bolton
- Public Transportation in Bolton (currently limited to the Trolley during the summer season)

Survey Results

1) Membership

- a) A great majority of responses indicated they are likely or very likely to renew their membership
- b) More than 75% of the responses indicated the following items were Important or Very Important**
 - i) Listing in our Annual High Quality Brochure
 - ii) Listing on our Chamber website
 - iii) Link from Chamber website to your website
 - iv) Display of your brochures, menus and literature in the Visitor Center
 - v) Referrals from the Chamber / Visitor Center to your business
 - vi) Email blast advertising opportunities to reach our email subscribers
- c) Write in comments included
 - i) Encourage more businesses to use social media. We can promote one another.
(1) The Chamber uses Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn to promote our members, members' events and Chamber events. We are working with Valerie Collier, who has started to manage the Chamber's social media.
 - ii) Hold networking events and mixers

- (1) **Please join us on Wednesday, May 24, 5-7 pm at the Bolton Landing Brewery for a Chamber mixer. We will provide one free drink ticket for the first 30 members. Light hors d'oeuvres will be available until they run out. We hope to see you there!**
- iii) Provide number of times the Chamber recommended our business or number of clicks from the Chamber to our website
 - (1) **We are working on a report to generate click information from our site to members' site and plan to provide this information by the end of 2023**
- iv) Sometimes the Chamber looks closed when it is open. More consistent coverage on weekends is needed.
 - (1) **The Bolton Visitor Center is open 9 am – 5 pm Saturday and Sunday from the last weekend in June until Labor Day.**
 - (2) **All other weekends we are open 10 am – 3 pm.**
- v) Notification of events at other Chamber member businesses.
 - (1) **We will seek Valerie Collier's input to enhance our notification of member's events**
 - (2) **Please visit the event section of the Bolton website. Members events can be added to our site by submitting event information to Mannix Marketing, who hosts our website.**
- d) 96% of responders indicated they are likely or very likely to recommend Bolton Chamber membership to others
- 2) Health Insurance** – We asked if members would be interested in participating in Chamber offered health insurance. Most of you asked for more information. **We are working with an insurance agent and will provide information as soon as we can.**
- 3) Educational Programs – We asked if there are educational programs the Chamber could sponsor to assist in your business success?
 - a) Quite a few responses included a desire to increase their knowledge of social media
 - b) There were a couple of requests for marketing ideas
 - c) We will look into offering educational programs on these topics in late fall**
- 4) Mixers and Dinners for Members – We asked if we started these activities again, how likely are you to attend?
 - a) There is strong support for hosting mixers.
 - b) **We are hosting a mixer on Wednesday, May 24, 5-7 pm at the Bolton Landing Brewery. We will provide one free drink ticket for the first 30 members. Light hors d'oeuvres will be available until they run out. We hope to see you there!**
- 5) Communication
 - a) Email blasts and e-newsletters provide the best means of communication to our members.
 - i) If you prefer to receive communications from the Chamber by mail instead of email, please contact Elaine (518-644-3831)**

- b) Members also go to our website, our annual booklet and Facebook promotions for news about the Chamber
 - c) Members indicated they are unsure how effective the Chamber is at promoting their business.
 - i) **We are working on a report to generate click information from our site to members' site and plan to provide this information by the end of 2023**
 - d) Most members are satisfied with the frequency of communication from the Chamber
- 6) Events
- a) The most important events are July 4th celebration, Labor Day music and fireworks and Bolton Live Music Festival in September
 - b) Half the members indicated the Arts & Crafts shows are important or very important.
 - c) Several members would like to see the Arts & Crafts shows not located in a parking lot; some requested that the shows be held on less busy weekends.
 - i) In response to these suggestions, **we will continue to seek another location for the Arts & Crafts vendors. We have cancelled the August show for 2023 and will be moving the Columbus Day show to a weekend in September.**
- 7) Staffing, housing and transportation – The questions in the survey on these topics are being discussed as part of the Bolton Community Alliance

Bolton Community Alliance

During 2022, Heidi read a lot about the lack of affordable housing for many communities in our area and in tourist areas across the US and around the world. I did not hear of any plans to address the lack of affordable housing in Bolton but I knew it was a problem. Over the past few months, I have met with

- Jim Siplon and John Wheatley of the Warren County EDC,
- Lynn Sickles and Kelly Saunders of the Southern Adirondack Child Care Network,
- Several Bolton residents about the lack of any licensed child care in Bolton

We have 3 basic challenges in Bolton – the lack of affordable housing for workers and households that would like to live here year 'round, a lack of child care and a lack of public transportation. These all contribute to the worker shortage and declining school enrollment. As I met with Bolton residents, I discovered others are interested in these topics and would like to see progress made in these areas. I held a meeting on March 20 and of April 25 at the Bolton Central School to discuss these topics. With input from others, we formed the Bolton Community Alliance. I have an email distribution of over 50 local people interested in these topics.

On March 29 and on April 11, I participated in zoom meetings with the Adirondack Foundation and the Northern Forest Center – two organizations who are working with other communities in the Adirondacks to resolve these issues and to try to encourage more people to move to the Adirondacks year 'round. I have talked to several people leading housing projects in other towns

and am seeking their input on how to proceed and what to consider. Everyone I have spoken with indicated the first thing to do is look at current zoning and see what changes can be made to provide for more affordable housing.

The Town of Bolton is updating its Comprehensive Plan, led by Josh Westfall, Director of Bolton Planning and Zoning. The plan will take a year to complete and is important in order to later seek grant funding for affordable housing.

The Town is looking to improve our old sewer system and treatment plant and to expand sewage capacity. An engineer will be doing a cost study for this project. Given the age of the system, an upgrade is needed. The system is almost at capacity so expanding the septic system capacity is also necessary.

Josh Westfall is looking at zoning in the hamlet. The goal is to reduce the # of variances needed to build in the hamlet, to review density, look at minimum setbacks, etc. He will be proposing changes to the Board, then there will be a public comment period before any changes are approved. This work will occur within the next 1-2 months. Zoning changes in the hamlet do not require APA approval but changes in density outside the hamlet do require APA approval. I'd like to see the town work to change zoning beyond the hamlet. I will talk to other towns in the Adirondack Park to see how they have proceeded in this area.

Regarding child care, flyers from the Southern Adirondack Child Care Network (SACCN) were sent home with the Bolton Central School elementary school children. The flyers promoted the idea of owning your own in-home child care business. Hopefully someone will reach out to SACCN to find out more information. It is much more expensive to provide child care in a center and Bolton is probably not large enough to allow for such a solution but I look forward to brainstorming with others on how we can make progress in this area.

On the topic of public transportation, we have **the Trolley that runs to Bolton Landing daily from late June until Labor Day weekend, 9 am to 9 pm every odd hour.** The Town of Bolton provides some funding to GGFT for this service. Based on our Chamber survey, a variety of people use the trolley. **Please promote this to your employees and our visitors if they can benefit from this service.**

After much discussion and consideration, the Warren County Board of Supervisors, on May 11, agreed to proceed with Albany based CDTA merging with the operations of the Greater Glens Falls Transit (GGFT). CDTA currently provides a mechanic and bus drivers to GGFT. GGFT is not able to continue operations after this year. Supervisors in effected areas do not want to lose the current bus and Trolley services. CDTA assured our County Administrator that CDTA will not expand to transportation services on the water (this had been one challenge in moving forward). Once they take over, CDTA will begin by maintaining the current routes. CDTA has a good reputation and reliable service. It will be paid for by ¼ of 1% of the mortgage tax collected by Warren County, which was \$1.3 million last year and is expected to be closer to \$800,000 this

year due to the increase in interest rates which reduces the volume of mortgage activity. This cost structure is a non-negotiable agreement that CDTA has with all other 5 Counties they serve.

Over the coming months, as we will be in the midst of our busy tourist season, I will work with others to make progress where we can, to continue conversations with leaders in other communities and to continue discussions with members of our community who are also looking for solutions. I expect the next meeting of the Bolton Community Alliance to be sometime in the fall.

If you have questions, comments or would like to add your email address to the Bolton Community Alliance distribution list, please contact me – Heidi Hess at info@candlelightcottages.com or 518-796-0314.

2023 Bolton Chamber Board of Directors

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