

March 30, 2023

To: Members and Businesses Served by the Northport/Omena Chamber of Commerce

RE: Chamber Update and Request

This is to update you on new Chamber board members, new efforts to serve the local businesses based on collected feedback and call for payment of 2023 dues in order to continue services to the community.

New Board Members and Active Participants: Barb Conley, Christina Pfeufer, Margo Millard, and Emma Adams have joined the board and several people have come forward ready to actively participate in activities and events to support our local business community. We are seeking 3 additional board members including the roles of President, Vice-President and Secretary (Sarah Hallstedt is staying on as Treasurer and Brayton Farr is staying on as Board member). Please email: northportomenachamberofcommerce@gmail.com if you are interested in joining the board (please note: there is no “e” at the end of the address before the @gmail.com).

Chamber Feedback and New Programming: Members have been seeking feedback from a sampling of local businesses. The Chamber’s activities are summarized below and when these are discussed, people understand the importance of a local chamber serving the businesses and community. The Chamber dues cover items such as the 6,000 Visitors’ Guides (which are brochures of Northport, Omena and Leelanau Township) distributed in northwest Michigan and in several Michigan Welcome Centers), website, flowers on the bridge and in downtown Northport, ad for Christmas in the Village, and other activities which many take for granted.

In addition, many respondents asked the Chamber to play a role in communication across businesses for common interests involving workforce housing and development, staff planning, and training. To that end, the Chamber is sharing the following information:

1. Workforce affordable housing applications for Vineyard View

Apartments: The construction of eight (8) new two-and three-bedroom apartments is underway in Suttons Bay and will be ready for occupancy by December. Rent is *subsidized* to ensure no more than 30% of a family’s income will be allocated toward housing expenses. Applicants will be selected based on their Income per household size ranging from 30-80% AMI per designated unit. These apartments will be 100% electric and benefit from solar energy, thereby reducing utility costs and benefitting the residents and the *environment*. Tenants

will be required to sign an annual lease. Many of our workforce employees will be eligible for these apartments so please pass the word to your staff. Applications are available through HomeStretch Housing by contacting Leah Pillsbury at 231-947-6001 or at Leah@homestretchhousing.org. We encourage them to call Leah to discuss their situation and income prior to receiving an application.

2. Tracker for Weekend Events: Weddings and special events can bring many visitors when they occur at one time, overwhelming local business staff. The desire is to create a restricted access calendar to track large events of >100 visitors to identify when they may coincide so that restaurants and retailers can staff to meet the demand. *We are seeking a volunteer to lead this effort, please respond to Sarah Hallstedt (317-440-9273 or Sarah@hhcherries.net) if you are interested in helping.*

3. Summer Intern Meetups: Many businesses have summer interns from out of the area and wish to broaden their appreciation of Leelanau to increase future summer workforce supply. A monthly speaker and casual social hour will begin on Wednesday May 24th to allow the interns to form friendships and gain knowledge of the local area. We have 6 interns signed up to date, please contact Phil Hallstedt at Phallstedt@gmail.com if you are interested in having your college-aged interns participate.

Call for Dues for 2023

Businesses and individuals have begun to send in dues for 2023. We will bring back the Golf Scramble this September as a fundraiser for the Chamber to keep the dues low and provide opportunities for business-to-business promotion and networking. To be a member, please complete the form and payment at <https://northportomenachamber.org/pay-dues>.

We continue to hear that many desire a strong local chamber of commerce to be the voice of the local business community and support local businesses to be successful.

If you have other ideas of what the Chamber should do and are willing to make them happen, please contact Sarah!

Thank you for your participation and support,

Sarah Hallstedt

Treasurer, Northport Omena Chamber of Commerce

So what DOES the Northport Omena Chamber of Commerce do? In 2022, we...

- * Updated, printed, paid for, and circulated 6,000 Visitors' Guides (\$2,400)
- * Supported and acted as the bank for the Village flowers, including ordering the placards (also absorbed almost \$500 of expenses over what was collected.)
- * Maintains and updates Chamber Facebook page
- * Receives and responds to phone calls and emails, mostly about events, Concerts in the Park, etc.
- * Produced a monthly e-newsletter about events in Northport and Omena, and features several Chamber business partners each month
- * Supported two Blood Drives in the Marina Parking Lot
- * Supported and acted as the bank for the Dog Parade (which distributed over \$6,000 to two Humane Societies and Black Sheep Crossing Farm)
- * Supported the 2022 Northport Public School Job Fair
- * Financially supported the Northport Public School Art project
- * Supported Leelanau UnCaged by soliciting for volunteers
- * Financially supported advertising for and created the ad for Christmas in the Village
- * Sponsors two miles of MDOT cleanup on both sides heading out of Northport going south
- * Sponsored Golf Tournament for Chamber exposure and as fund-raiser to keep dues reasonable (2021).

What COULD the Northport Omena Chamber of Commerce do?

- Weekly updates re: what restaurants are open and hours, events, business hours
- Monthly networking opportunities for business owners (“Business after Hours”, coffees)
- Post job needs?
- Focus on increasing traffic during shoulder season
- Arrange workshops – Social media (Facebook, Instagram)
- More support to “out-of-village” businesses

We would like to hear from you about more ideas!