

Hopes for Chamber taking root

Written by MARK JAEGER

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Local business owners tell village officials they are interested in organizing

There was a strong showing of support for the creation of a Fredonia Chamber of Commerce during a recent dinner meeting hosted by the Village of Fredonia Economic Development Committee.

Eighteen local business owners attended the meeting, held at Ozaukee High School.

Village Trustee Lisa Dohrwardt, chairman of the committee, served as moderator for the evening but made it clear the impetus for the formation of the group needs to come from the business community.

“One of the primary functions of a Chamber is to lobby local government on issues that affect area businesses, so I think it would be a conflict of interest for me to serve on the Village Board and the Chamber,” she said.

“Fredonia is the only community in Ozaukee County that doesn’t have a Chamber. With the growth we are seeing here, I think it is time we form a Chamber to promote business growth.”

Dohrwardt said the viability of the organization might be helped if Waubeka businesses are also welcomed to the group.

She urged those at the meeting to check out the www.uschamber.com website for more information on the role Chambers serve in their community and how they can be organized.

Dohrwardt said the business community is small enough that the group could probably get by with a volunteer staff, at least initially.

Laurie Ziegler, owner of a Saukville accounting business who is building a home in Fredonia, encouraged the group to move forward. She is a past president of the Grafton Chamber and a member of the Saukville Chamber.

“I think it is a great idea and about time, especially the way the community is growing,” Ziegler said.

Trustee Fritz Buchholtz saw the benefits of a business organization when he ran a retail shop in Shorewood.

“You need a group like this, whether you call it a Chamber or a merchants association. When issues come up that affect your business, you need someone representing your interests,” Buchholtz said.

Northern Ozaukee School Supt. Blake Peuse said he realizes the value a strong business community has on the local tax base.

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“We definitely want to be a part of this, because an improved tax base is ultimately going to be in the best interest of our children,” Peuse said.

He offered to allow the group to continue meeting at the high school.

The group held off on taking a formal vote on forming a Chamber, but agreed to meet again at 6 p.m. Monday, April 29.