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Big Changes For Chamber

Mark Sapp, co-chair of the South Queens Chamber of Commerce declares, “The Chamber is not dead. Actually, we are on the verge of big changes to improve our visibility and credibility.”

Sapp, along with co-chair Henry Sewuster of On-Line Support are leading the organization through this transformation. They are assisted by eight other local business people who serve on the board of directors.

Change consultant Susan Barthos worked with the Chamber recently to help them identify some key areas to focus on. The group’s monthly meetings were felt to be cumbersome and non-productive, so changes to meeting format and structure are underway. As well, the group plans to become more active in hosting business networking events and public forums. A third key focus is to help the businesses realize more benefits of chamber membership by preparing a formal benefit package.

Aiding the members in these initiatives will be a part time administration officer. The hiring process has started, and is expected to be complete by the end of September.

Krista Harding of South Shore Opportunities has offered the chamber a portion of a youth intern position for the next 12 months. It has been at least 8 years since the Chamber has had a paid employee to support their activities.

“This will give us the opportunity to really follow through on many of our plans,” said Sapp. “We are truly thankful that Krista and her organization share our vision of a strong and effective chamber, and were in a position to provide this kind of tangible support.”

A new website (www.southqueenschamber.com) has been developed to improve communications with the membership, and with anyone else interested in the community. One of the primary duties of the new admin officer will be to improve and maintain this site. An interesting feature of the new site is the “Forum” – a moderated discussion page allowing everyone to post a question, comment or opinion.

The Chamber of Commerce represents business interests in South Queens, but has languished in recent years with low membership numbers. The new board believes it is important to increase its membership numbers, and to broaden the base to include all types of retail, service, and professional businesses.

“This is a difficult economy. There are lots of challenges for business people. I believe that by working together to implement these changes, we can strengthen the businesses, the community and the chamber,” concludes Mark Sapp.