

## North Fork Promotion Council president to step down in January

by Cyndi Murray | 12/19/2014 2:00 PM

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Joan Bischoff, kneeling and wearing red pants, outside Town Hall in May. (Credit: Cyndi Murray, file)

The North Fork Promotion Council is looking for a new president in 2015.

Joan Bischoff announced plans to step aside in the New Year after serving four years as the group's president, a volunteer role.

"We need new people to step up," Mr. Bischoff said Thursday. "If all the old people kept hanging around there is no place for new blood. I don't want to stand in the way of that."

Mr. Bischoff, whose full-time job is executive sale manager at Town & Country Real Estate in Southold, joined the group as a volunteer treasurer in 2006.

The Council, which compromises dozens of local businesses including bed & breakfasts, restaurants and chambers of commerce, shares the collective goal of increasing tourism and business on the North Fork throughout the year.

When he was named president in 2011, Mr. Bischoff said his goal was to encourage local business to work together on events and marketing.

Reflecting back on Thursday, Mr. Bischoff said he believes the Council achieved that goal.

"We helped formulate a clear strategy of what the North Fork is and what the North Fork needs in terms of the small business community," he said. "I hope that we made a difference there, and I hope that continues."

With Mr. Bischoff at the helm, the North Fork Promotion Council was successful in bringing more attention to the area's wineries, breweries, restaurants and shops, said Phillip Beltz, Southold Town's special project coordinator, who also serves on the town's economic development committee.

Mr. Bischoff played a key role in organizing the first-ever state sponsored Taste North Fork event to the region during Veteran's Day weekend in 2013, which brought with it a spike in business during a slower part of the year, Mr. Beltz said.

"I have worked closely with him on several initiatives, particularly Taste North Fork where we galvanized the Southold business community to participate," Mr. Beltz said. "He demonstrated extraordinary leadership in helping to position the tourism industry in the Town of Southold and the North Fork.

"He will be missed as president."

On Thursday, Greenport Business Improvement District president Peter Clarke, who has worked closely with the Council to promote village events, echoed Mr. Beltz's sentiments.

"It is going to be a challenge to fill his shoes," Mr. Clarke told members of the BID during its monthly meeting Thursday morning. "He has been a very dynamic and hard working leader the past few years."

Mr. Bischoff said he would stay on as president until the Council's board of directors appoints a new one sometime in late January, adding that he would continue to participate in the Council's efforts as a regular member going forward.

"It is a great organization and I will be there to help in any way I can," he said.