

News

Promotion Council leaders: Business groups need to unite

by Vera Chinese | 01/25/2015 10:00 AM

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The North Fork Promotion Council kiosk in Laurel. (Credit: Vera Chinese)

More than 6,000 visitors stopped by The North Fork Promotion Council's two information kiosks in Laurel and Greenport in 2014. The nonprofit organization launched a new activities website last year and it will have a presence at the New York Times Travel Show at the Jacob Javits Center in Manhattan this weekend.

But it hasn't gone far enough in its mission to market this region to those with disposable income living in New York City and beyond, according to members at the organization's annual meeting on Wednesday evening.

"There is a feeling if we could form some kind of organization that just envelops everything that is going — and maybe the council could be it, maybe it's a new organization that encompasses everything — that doesn't replace everything that is going on already, but just allows us to communicate better and find synergies ... that would be great," NFPC president Joan Bischoff told the 10 board members in attendance. "There are too few people who are willing to volunteer and willing to do the work and there are too few financial resources to do on as we have."

Instead, the regional chambers of commerce, industry organizations and business improvement district management organizations should unite under an umbrella group to serve the region at large, Bischoff said.

Currently, the following organizations exist aside from the NFPC representing business interests in Southold Town: the Mattituck Chamber of Commerce, the Greenport Business Improvement District, the North Fork Chamber of Commerce, the Long Island Wine Council, the North Fork Bed & Breakfast Association, and the Long Island Farm Bureau, to name a few.

The ultimate goal, Mr. Bischoff said, would be to hire a full-time executive director who could apply for grants, lobby in Albany and better market the region. He compared the role to that of Steve Bate, the executive director of the Long Island Wine Council.

"When you're in the business of tourism, you are competing with regions that are spending millions of dollars," he said. "That money is a drop in the bucket that you really need to compete to (GET?) the money you need to compete with New York City, with even Connecticut and amusement parks close by."

Others at the meeting, which took place at the Peconic Lane Community Center, agreed.

"I've been trying to get us all to merge for 10 years," said NFPC vice president Joe Corso, who also serves as president of the North Fork Chamber of Commerce. "The North Fork over the past 20 years has exploded with tourism."

The organization also appointed Abigail Field, who has been maintaining the NFPC's new website gonorthfork.org, as its new interim executive director.

"I'm looking forward to helping the North Fork Promotion Council become a more efficient promoter of our local businesses and the North Fork brand," she said after the meeting. "You do that not by finding as many [visitors] as possible, but by finding the right people."

In other news, Bischoff said he would not be stepping down from his volunteer position, despite announcing plans to leave late last year. Mr. Bischoff, whose full-time job is executive sales manager at Town & Country Real Estate in Southold, joined the group as a volunteer treasurer in 2006.