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New group organizes for local business concerns

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By STEVE PRISAMENT
 Staff Writer



GALLOWAY TOWNSHIP – While it might be popular in France to celebrate differences, leaders of the new Galloway Township Business Association say they plan to focus on the commonality of members.

"This is going to be a very invigorated and involved group," said Stephen Moliver, chairman of the township's Economic Development Committee and interim president of the business association during its formative months.

"This was our fourth organizing meeting," Moliver said Friday, Sept. 18 when about a dozen founding members met in a vacant office area at Tilton Fitness. "It started about three or four months ago when a number of businesses came to the Economic Development Committee and asked why we had no local business organization."

Subsequently, Moliver said, more people approached him about starting an organization similar to a chamber of commerce.

"I felt it was important to put a good structure of individuals in place," he said. "The group should have a sense of purpose, objectives."

Moliver's membership in the business association is through his firm, MOL Strategies, of which he is president.

The group has scheduled a Founders' Kickoff Event and New Member Fall Cocktail Reception for 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 14 at Smithville Inn on Route 9 in Galloway Township.

The event is free with a cash bar. It will include a presentation for prospective members.

Annual dues for an organization are \$75. There is no initiation fee and the first year's dues apply through all of 2010.

Julianne Dods, vice president of Tilton Fitness Management, is proposed to be the new association's president for 2010.

"The entire business community will benefit from this group," Dods said after the Sept. 18 meeting. "We're not forming to promote competition. We want to provide education, resources, scholarships and opportunities for networking."

Goal 1, she said, was to get their kickoff announcement out there.

"We want to invite businesspeople to come together to form the vision," she said. "Bring what's important to you. Getting a good understanding of what we're working with will determine the next goals."

Dods, who lives in Linwood, said she wants the organization to be thought of as a resource.

Tony Coppola Jr., vice president of operations for Smithville Hospitality Co., which runs Smithville Inn and Fred and Ethel's at Historic Smithville, is the proposed vice president for 2010.

"Having a healthy business climate will help all the businesses in Galloway," Coppola said. "There will be a lot of advantages to businesses and residents. The more business we have, the more we offset the tax burden from residents."

Business to business commerce could tap a huge revenue source for many, he said.

"There are many viable options in Galloway now, but people are not necessarily aware of them," Coppola said. "We want to create an attitude where people have an allegiance to Galloway businesses."

The association would also open new doors for philanthropy, he said.

"A lot of local businesses want to get involved with giving," Coppola said. "Individually they can't make an impact. But together we can. In some cases, where you might have to turn down an organization, you could direct them to the association."

Moliver said he hoped to have more than 100 members by year's end.

Seven years ago there was a local group called the Galloway Business Association led by Dick Price which had 168 members.

"Once I didn't win, the group fizzled," according to Charles Endicott who was mayor at the beginning of this decade. "We had a lot of ideas – a YMCA, a train station near the White Horse Pike. None of these things came to fruition."

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That was Price's memory also.

"There was no cooperation between us and Township Council," he said. "We were looking to have windmills and promoting development along the White Horse Pike. Nobody on council wanted to do anything."

Anyone interested in attending the Galloway Township Business Association inaugural event can call (609) 652-3700, ext. 229, email RSVP@GallowayBusiness.com or visit www.GallowayBusiness.com.

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