

Yellow Springs Chamber of Commerce
Chamber Chat – Local Business Advocacy
Thursday, February 18, 2010

Attendance: Roger Reynolds* (Little Art Theatre); Randy Gifford (Reichley Insurance Agency); Susan Miller* (YSI); Pam Geisel (For Quilts Sake); Al Cummings (HRI Commercial Real Estate); Becky Baker (Friends Care Community); Sarah Wildman (Yellow Springs Economic Sustainability Coordinator); David Kell (Greene County Department of Development); Maria Goeser (Ohio Department of Development); Phyllis Schmidt (PD Schmidt Design); Kathryn Hitchcock (YS News); Jacki Mayer* (WYSO); Sandy Love (Millworks); Roi Qualls (E-Health Data); Patti Dallas (The Village Guesthouse); Marianne McQueen (Home Inc.); Tom Clune (Sanderson Insurance); Michael Casselli (Non-Stop Institute); Amy Lee (US Bank); Virgil Hervey (Gunch Press); Kay Reimers (Living History Theatre); David Graham (Greene County Auditor's Office); Anthony Barry* (SuperFly Comics & Games); Kathleen McMillan (Equine Artist); Christine Roberts (Kisses & Hugs Car Wash); Jacqui Slone & William Creepingbear (Vitruvian Brew Co.) Joanne Caputo (YS Arts Council); Karen Wintrow & Krystal Luketic (Chamber staff) * Chamber Board Members

This was the first Chamber event for 2010 focusing on networking and education for our members to address what local businesses need from the Chamber, the government, each other and the community to be successful. Several local officials were on hand to lend their expertise to the discussion and advise about resources, loan programs and offer guidance to help businesses.

Each official described their role in helping local businesses.

Sarah Wildman, Yellow Springs Economic Sustainability Coordinator **(937) 767-3702**

Sarah is the first point of contact for businesses in Yellow Springs looking for assistance. She discussed the Village's Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund as a potential funding resource for local businesses and advised that she will be working to further develop and communicate the program.

Dave Kell - Greene County Retention and Expansion Program Coordinator **(937) 562-5351**

David is a resource for Greene County and can link businesses up with local, regional and state resources. He also works to connect Greene County businesses with each other. David has local experience connecting a business owner with some funding to purchase a new business location so that he was able to keep his business in Yellow Springs.

Maria Goeser - Ohio Department of Development Business Services Rep **(937) 285-6185**

Maria is a resource for State programs including Project Hire that offers \$6000 to businesses hiring displaced workers. She is the voice to connect the local region to the State.

Attendees then began a roundtable discussion as summarized below:

Concern was expressed with the schism between some in the Village and business feeling that there is a lack of understanding that business is the engine that fuels the Village.

It was suggested that the Chamber become more active as an advocate for local business given the risks associated with owning a business in Yellow Springs.

Another suggestion was for a voice to identify the issues that affect local business and that make it difficult to do business in Yellow Springs.

The idea of a business incubator was mentioned as well as the ability to share resources like office space, equipment, staff and other services. It was mentioned that the Non-Profit Network is gathering data on available resources for sharing.

US Bank is promoting the Ohio Grow Now loan program that offers a 3% loan rate discount. Amy Lee asks for local businesses to contact her to learn more. David Kell provided brochures.

In response to a question about whether Greene County or the State has funds for marketing, both David and Maria indicated that budgets are tight. David did discuss the new marketing program "Growing Greene – Agriculture to Aerospace" that will be used to attract businesses to Greene County. Karen was active in the committee that developed the marketing plan as were representatives from the entire county.

When asked about grant opportunities from the State, Maria said that there are so many they're difficult to keep track of and they change on a regular basis. She specifically mentioned agriculture grants from the USDA. She suggested that specific needs could be researched to determine if any grant opportunities existed.

Concern was expressed about the strong emphasis on the Central Business District believing that the CBD alone was not enough to fuel the economy of Yellow Springs. A fear has been expressed that economic development at the Center for Business and Education would erode business in the CBD. Businesses look for locations that are easy to access, have amenities that are attractive to their employees and where they are welcomed. The comments continued with an expression that the greenbelt to the west of Yellow Springs was negative to the community because it limited development and increased the cost of doing business here.

A suggestion was made that we determine what kind of business we want in Yellow Springs; should it be manufacturing or high tech. Sarah mentioned the SAS Automation facility in Xenia as a clean and compatible manufacturing facility whose owners actually live in Yellow Springs. She also talked about a Jobs Summit hosted by State Rep Chris Weidener where the story was told of a business that relocated from Wisconsin to Springfield because officials were persistent in encouraging the move and everyone spoke with one voice giving a consistent, unified message.

It was suggested that the Chamber should be responsible for conducting exit interviews with businesses that leave Yellow Springs. Sarah added that the Village has a role in that also. Karen remarked that often that kind of information is confidential and folks might not be aware of what the Chamber and Village are doing in that regard.

The opportunity available in the Railroad St. corridor was expressed with the hope to create a compatible mixed use development extending from Dayton St. to Millworks. Concern was expressed that new construction can be cost prohibitive to new businesses and artists so it's important to retain a wide range of facility opportunities.

It was pointed out that Yellow Springs has vast local business resources and it's important to work locally whenever possible.

One attendee expressed frustration with communicating with a State official regarding a grant program. David, Maria and Sarah are all advocates that can be called on in that situation.

It was asked if there were resources to shepherd a new business owner through the development of a business plan and other needs. David suggested the Small Business Development Center located at Wright State University.

The Yellow Springs Arts Council will have a panel discussion on March 27 called "The Business of Art" with speakers to make recommendations to artists on how to conduct themselves more as businesses.

Additional Resources:

- Chamber Website Business Resource Links:

http://www.yellowspringsohio.org/members/business_resources.html

- Sarah Wildman - Yellow Springs Economic Sustainability Coordinator (937) 767-3702
- Dave Kell - Greene County Retention and Expansion Program Coordinator (937) 562-5351
- Maria Goeser - Ohio Department of Development Business Services Rep (937) 285-6185
- Carol Baumhauer - Small Business Development Center, Director Ohio SBDC, Region 4 at Wright State University; (937) 775-3487; <http://www.sbdcsu.org/>