

Chamber-Main Street News and Knows
by Interim Director Jim Davies

What did the Chamber of Commerce look like 50 years ago in 1975?

To provide context, here is a very general overview of our country, state, and local community in 1975.

- The Vietnam War was ending.
- Gerald Ford was the President and Nelson Rockefeller was the Vice President.
- The population of the United States was 216 million (2024 = 341 million).
- The unemployment rate was 5.6% (Jan. 2025 = 4%).
- The cost of a first-class stamp was \$.10, a loaf of bread was \$.33, a gallon of milk was \$.46, a gallon of gas averaged \$.57, and a dozen eggs were \$.66.
- Merv Griffin's game show, Wheel of Fortune, premiered on NBC.
- Robert D. Ray was the Governor of Iowa.
- Population of Franklin County 1970 = 13,255, 1980 = 13,036, 2023 = 9,875.
- Population of Hampton 1970 = 4,376, 1980 = 4,630, 2022 = 4,328.
- I graduated from high school. (FYI, Hampton Class of 1975 reunion is Saturday, August 23)

In the January 30, 1975, issue of the Hampton Chronicle, there was a full-page advertisement listing the 1975 Officers and Committees of the Hampton Chamber of Commerce. (Doing business as the Greater Franklin County Chamber was added in 2011.)

A photo and a list of the board of directors was under the headline of the ad that stated, "Committed To Building A Better Hampton Business Community." Committees, members of each, and member phone numbers were then listed.

I was amazed at the number of committees and the number of individuals involved! Here is a list of 1975 committees and the number of members on each:

- Central Committee, 20 members
- Membership and Finance Committee, 26 members
- Retail Committee, 23 members
- Ambassadors, formerly Public Relations, 8 teams of 7 people each = 56 total members
- Agri-Business Committee, 20 members
- Legislative Committee, 8 members
- House Committee, 5 members
- Tourism Committee, 9 members (including 3 married couples)
- Decorations Committee, 7 members

Looking through the list of people, I knew or recognized the names of most; all but four (?) are deceased.

Looking at that 1975 Chronicle page, to me, it looked like a majority of every chamber member might have had at least one representative participating in some way on one or

more chamber committees or helping plan an event. It appeared that most names listed were employees of retail businesses.

Bringing us back to the present time, what would happen if each current chamber member had one or two employees volunteering to serve in some capacity to help the Chamber build a better Franklin County business community? What would happen if all businesses and organizations joined the Chamber, not just paying the membership dues, but offering to contribute volunteer hours too?

I don't think there are ever too many volunteers or a lack of something to work on and improve.

I've often been asked, "What can the Chamber do for me?" Good question. I say in response, "What can you and your business or organization do for the betterment of all?" Think about it.

Here are two upcoming Chamber events. Please consider attending.

A Chamber Quarterly Coffee, sponsored by Mort's Water Company, will be held on Friday, March 7 starting at 8:00 am at the Latimer Community Center. There is no cost to attend. This gathering promotes upcoming events, welcomes new chamber members, provides an opportunity for chamber members to share what is happening at their business or with their organization, and networking with others.

The annual Chamber Celebration and Appreciation Night, Better Together, will be held on Saturday, March 22 at the Hampton Country Club. Social time begins at 5:00 pm serving hors d'oeuvres followed by fun games of Heads or Tails and the Survey Says. A silent auction will be held and awards presented. Tickets are available at Center 1. The cost is \$35 per person or \$200 for a table of six.

Keep informed about what is happening in our part of the world by reading the Chamber's weekly Tuesday Newsday. For more information, email communications@hamptoniowa.org or mainstreet@hamptoniowa.org.



