

## Agenda

- Listen to local harbor businesses to get their perspectives on harbor activity this summer and how their businesses fared
- Discuss how the committee could help support the local businesses to stay open year-round

## Participants

- Committee members (in person): Pat Balch, Phil Harrell, Lisa Hoekstra, Tony Marino, John Quackenbos, Pete Smith
- Small business owners (in person): Brittany Bash, Reese Brown, Sharon Parsons
- Small business owners (via Google Meet) Tim Fenton, Gabe Humprey, Deb Pasculano
- The meeting was held at Prospect Hill Antiques from 5:30-7:30pm.

## Minutes:

The meeting kicked off with a small group of local Sunapee Harbor business owners sharing with the committee their perspectives on how this summer went

- Overall, business owners reported a much higher level of traffic in the harbor and in their establishments this summer and business was up as well for them. One business owner said that although traffic in her store was up, sales were flat vs. last year.
- Group discussed current challenges to driving more activity in the harbor during the offseason, including:
  - Several overlapping online resources for advertising local businesses in Sunapee Harbor (e.g., [visitsunapeeharbor.com](http://visitsunapeeharbor.com), [projectsunapee.org](http://projectsunapee.org), [SunapeeHarbor.com](http://SunapeeHarbor.com)), but no coordinated effort to boost online presence via one website, one social network site
  - Many of the local businesses don't keep their hours up to date on their own websites, on listing sites (e.g., Yelp) and websites like [visitsunapeeharbor.com](http://visitsunapeeharbor.com) and [projectsunapee.org](http://projectsunapee.org), which means that visitors come into harbor with the expectation to be able to shop, only to find the businesses closed. Bad experience for visitors which impacts their desire to return.

- Better coordination required to notify businesses that tour buses are coming into the harbor so that local businesses can be open
- Better coordination needed on upcoming events that individual business owners are sponsoring to eliminate overlapping events (e.g., two bands playing at the same time)
- Short-term rental shortage causing issues with ability of potential visitors being able to stay open year round
- Some of the businesses are not winterized, which limits their ability to stay open year round
- Committee members and local business owners discussed ways to address challenges:
  - Schedule monthly meeting of local business owners to coordinate activities to drive overall traffic into Sunapee Harbor
  - Align local businesses around one centralized website and social presence that can become the primary website for advertising all local businesses. Ensure that all store hours, calendars are up to date.
  - Set up a meeting of all local business owners to discuss the idea of paying a marketing manager to manage resources (website, social, SEO optimization) designed to drive traffic for all businesses in Sunapee Harbor.
  - Consider using other forms of advertising to drive traffic such as radio advertising.
  - Ask Abby Peel for a proposal for how much it would cost to have several hours of her time/week to boost website presence and solicit several other bids as well. Issue an RFP for other proposals as well.
  - Develop a universal tag line for Sunapee Harbor to promote its year-round attractions

**Next Steps:**

- Set up a meeting with a larger set of local business owners in October to discuss better coordination and contributing to hiring a full-time marketing manager. Phil to send out Doodle poll with suggested dates, committee members will send it out to small businesses to ensure that we get good attendance.