



Growth Leads Belmont Chamber To Expand Vision, Adopt New Name

A wider vision and a new name for the Belmont Chamber of Commerce are planned for 2008, more than 230 members and friends learned at the 48th Annual Banquet and meeting Thursday at Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden.

Montcross Area Chamber of Commerce will be the new name, derived from the name of the enormous 1,100-acre retail, residential and commercial project being developed along I-85 between the Catawba and South Fork rivers in eastern Gaston County. Incoming 2008 Chairman Titus Workman made the announcement, noting the Montcross project touches five of the six towns in the two easternmost townships of Gaston County.

Incorporated in 1960 as a Chamber primarily serving one community, the Belmont Chamber has evolved to serve a wider region as it has grown by 262 percent since 2005 to more than 300 members. Workman said the new name better describes a Chamber serving members in many towns. "Close to 40 percent of our membership now lists an address other than Belmont," Workman said. "Our members are in every town in eastern Gaston, plus Gastonia, Charlotte, Lake Wylie and many other communities."

Adopting the Montcross Area name better positions the Chamber to be a catalyst for collaboration among all eastern Gaston County communities, Workman said.

The name change, approved by the Chamber Board of Directors on January 15, had been discussed for more than two years. The idea of a name change was presented in September at a luncheon for 21 past presidents of the Chamber. In October, members attending a two-day conference to formulate long-range plans for the Chamber made a wider vision and a name change top priority objectives.

Chamber President Ted Hall said the shift toward serving a wider region began almost immediately after the planning conference with the introduction of a new web site featuring information about all six eastern Gaston towns. When a newcomer guide was published in December, it covered Mount Holly, Cramerton, McAdenville, Lowell and Stanley in addition to Belmont.

Advisory positions on the Chamber board have been created for representatives from all six towns. As the Chamber continues to grow, the board envisions office locations in other towns as well as in Belmont, Hall said.

Partners in the Montcross project embraced the idea of the Chamber adopting the name. The Montcross project, which has been called the next Ballantyne, is being developed on land owned by the Southern Benedictine Society at Belmont Abbey College, Pharr Yarns, R.L. Stowe Mills and Parkdale Mills. More than 14,000 jobs are projected to be created in the project over the next 30 years.