

Dear Members,

For the past year, representatives from FMA have participated with representatives from FEDC and the Town of Freeport in a committee to examine the viability of a Chamber of Commerce in Freeport that would include destination marketing in its responsibility structure. Recently, this Chamber Task Force Committee presented the resulting recommendation to our Board of Directors, and after adjusting in response to comments, presented in an open meeting to FMA members and other interested businesses. We received a lot of feedback as a result, representing many sides of the question.

On January 21, after thoughtful discussion and debate, the FMA Board of Directors voted that the proposal as presented could not be supported by FMA, but that we are prepared to work with all interested parties to explore alternative opportunities that preserve the interests of our members.

After that vote, the Chamber Task Force Committee made a strong effort to address some of our concerns. An ensuing Task Force meeting, that included representatives from FMA, proved to be a productive discussion aimed at finding common ground.

With this new information, the FMA Board convened again on February 4 and, after another long and thoughtful discussion, voted that we agree that a united organization has the potential to be beneficial to our members and to the community, and that we would like to continue as part of the process of developing exactly what the eventual organization is to become.

The Board has made it clear that we maintain unrelenting interest in protecting the mission of FMA and will work in good faith so long as that mission is not compromised. It is FMA's goal that this partnership will help to enhance the destination marketing of Freeport.

While we recognize that this process can - and with hard work will- prove to be fruitful, we intend to proceed in a manner that ensures that our members and our mission will benefit.

It is *very* important to understand that if we can develop an effective partnership, it will not culminate in a new organization anytime before January of 2010. This year's memberships should not be affected in any way. In the mean time there is much work to be done right now to help drive your businesses in this difficult economic climate, and FMA is working harder than ever to make that happen.

Yours in Business,

Tim Paul
President, Board of Directors
Freeport Merchants Association