



Joint Statement re: Announcement of South Kingstown Chamber of Commerce Proposed Name Change

September 27, 2011

The Charlestown, Narragansett, North Kingstown and Greater Westerly-Pawcatuck Area Chambers of Commerce are not affiliated with, not supportive of nor wish to have their interests represented by the South Kingstown Chamber of Commerce's reinvention of itself as the Southern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce.

While it is the legal right of the South Kingstown Chamber of Commerce to change its name, the new name, Southern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce is a gross misrepresentation of the geographic area that the organization serves. The name change is more than presumptuous; it is offensive to the 4 viable, active chambers throughout South County Rhode Island and flagrantly misleading to the public. Basically, an organization with 630 members has made an attempt to usurp the totality of 4 membership groups whose combined membership totals 1,827. Our objection is to the fact that the South Kingstown Chamber of Commerce wants to operate under a name that implies coverage of an area well represented by vibrant, existing chambers in Westerly, North Kingstown, Narragansett and Charlestown. Furthermore, the South Kingstown Chamber has not, and does not, have a substantial presence, in terms of programs, events, services or actual members in the proposed territory they hope to serve (Richmond, Hopkinton and Exeter).

The name change was not precipitated by a merger of two southern Rhode Island chambers or by a new partnership among them. It is merely an aggressive and strategic branding tactic that disregards, and will strain relations, with the very chambers with whom they claim to want to "collaborate". This name change has the exact opposite effect: it alienates the South Kingstown Chamber of Commerce.

The South Kingstown Chamber of Commerce is grappling with the fact that the mergers they have posed to both Charlestown Chamber of Commerce and Narragansett Chamber of Commerce have been soundly rejected, more than once.

The fact that there are strong, successful chamber organizations operating within Southern Rhode Island, and there was no discussion with them about the potential name change speaks volumes about the South Kingstown Chamber's motive and desire to collaborate. They have no true intention of collaboration and are simply looking for a forceful means to dominate the landscape and further their political agenda.

While our Chambers have established brands and member loyalty our objection also stems from the potential for confusion from the public. People using "Google" to seek information from the other chambers in southern Rhode Island could be misdirected to an organization that only serves a small portion of the South County area.

We, the united chambers of southern RI, ask that the South Kingstown Chamber of Commerce's Board of Directors reconsider their decision.

Charlestown
Chamber of Commerce

Ann Cook
Board Chair

Heather Paliotta
Executive Director

Narragansett
Chamber of Commerce

Megan Moran
Board Chair

Deborah Kelso
Executive Director

North Kingstown
Chamber of Commerce

Toby Aaron
Board Chair

Karla Driscoll
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Greater Westerly-
Pawcatuck Area Chamber
of Commerce

Michelle Pendola
Board Chair

Lisa Konicki
Executive Director