Chamber of Commerce plays active role in area

Daily Collegian Staff Writer Some people may regard the State College

Area Chamber of Commerce as meaning nothing more than a few businessmen getting together for lunch downtown.

This voluntary organization, however, plays an active role in the Centre Region's development through a committee structure designed to meet community needs. Suggestions from these committees are given serious consideration in the decision-making processes of the University and local governments.

University students and local residents also may utilize the Chamber's information services. 'We work for the betterment of the community," says Patricia L. Cahalen, executive director of the Chamber. "We have a wealth of information for the whole area and it's here (131 Sowers St.) for anyone who wants it."

The 300-member group, which includes businesses, professional services, industries and private individuals, still holds monthly luncheons, but discussion goes beyond the sand-

Thirteen committees, each designed to im-

plement some aspect of the Chamber's program of work, discuss activities which usually affect the Centre region. For example, the committees have various priorities in this year's proposals:

 To maintain an even economic growth, the Chamber's area development committee is investigating the possibility of locating more light, clean industry in the Centre Region. — The transportation committee has been

discussing the feasibility of bus service between State College and Bellefonte. - Objecting to a new ordinance which increases the garbage collection rate for apart-

ment units, the apartment owners and managers committee has taken legal action against the - The Downtown Business Association will

continue its effort to improve downtown lighting standards, trash receptacles and street

After discussing a particular issue, committees usually forward a recommendation to the Chamber's board of directors. The board considers the recommendation and, if it agrees, issues the Chamber's policy statement concerning the matter.

When it concerns the borough, such a policy statement carries some weight when the State College Municipal Council considers action, council member Wallis A. Lloyd says.

"We try to touch base with the Chamber," Lloyd says of council-Chamber realtions. "We consider a suggestion from the Chamber seriously - as you should any traditionally longstanding group.'

The Downtown Business Association, for example, has made a recommendation to council that a second parking garage is needed for State College. "A number of the committees are concerned

with local issues where the local government's consideration is required," says Lloyd, a former president of the Chamber. "There's a good bit of dialogue between the

Chamber and the borough," he says. An example of this exchange of ideas is the area development committee's plan to assist council and the Centre Regional Council of Governments in determining whether an indoor recreational facility is needed for the area.

In a move to keep abreast of political issues which affect the community, the Chamber

recently established a local governmental affairs committee.

The other side of College Avenue — the University — also has been working closely with the Chamber.

Through the University's mailing, the Chamber sends each fall a detailed map of State College and the University Park campus to the homes of approximately 8,000 new students.

The Chamber also offers a Campus Day Program during orientation to acquaint students with the business community.

"We have a long way to go, but we're moving in the proper direction," Mimi Barash, Chamber member and a University trustee, says of relations between the Chamber and the University. "There's an awareness that we're. interdependent, but there's lots of room to

The Chamber provides University students with many of the services offered by the Organization of Town Independent Students. Numerous guides to State College, housing information and consumer protection data are available at the Chamber office.

Cahalen says the Chamber functions as the

area's better business bureau in processing consumer complaints.

After a complaint is filed, the Chamber contacts the store or service to hear its side of the! story. The Chamber then tries to bring together the business and consumer to work out their differences, Cahalen says.

"Many complaints aren't legitimate," she says. "Unsatisfied people will return to the store and talk to the salesperson. They should talk to the owner because the salesperson has no

Approximately 80 percent of the of the com-plaints filed with the Chamber are resolved satisfactorily for both parties, Cahalen says. If the consumer still is not satisfied after the Chamber's intervention, Cahalen advises him to get an attorney or file a complaint with the district magistrate.

Although Chamber activities concentratemainly on local concerns, state and national legislation is watched closely by the governmental affairs committee for state and federal issues. The committee tries to provide input," such as testimony and lobbying.

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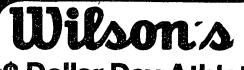
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