



# VIEW*S* & VISIONS

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## At the Heart of It All

Tina H. Combs, President and CEO  
Martinsburg-Berkeley County Chamber of Commerce

Tina H. Combs, a resident of Berkeley County for 25 years, has been the president and CEO of the Martinsburg-Berkeley County Chamber of Commerce since 2004. Her education includes a bachelor's degree in organizational leadership and certificates in economic development and non-profit organization management.

Combs is the treasurer of the Main Street Martinsburg board of directors, treasurer of the Berkeley County Business Education Partnership, past chairman of the Blue Ridge Community and Technical College Board of Governors, and past president of the West Virginia Chamber of Commerce Executives Association. She serves on the Region 7 Workforce Investment Board and the James Rumsey Technical Institute Local School Improvement Committee. Combs is a 2005 graduate of Leadership Berkeley and is a member of the Martinsburg Rotary Club.

She was appointed to the West Virginia Board of Education by Governor Earl Ray Tomblin in January 2013 and also serves on the West Virginia School Building Authority.

I'm often surprised by the number of people who do not understand what a Chamber of Commerce is or what it does. Each time this happens, it reminds me that we need to do a better job telling our story.

A Chamber of Commerce means different things to different communities, but functions as a membership organization that works for the betterment of the community by supporting the businesses and organizations in that community. Often confused with being a department of the government or the Better Business Bureau, most local Chambers are private organizations funded by its members through membership dues, events and sponsorships. In Berkeley County, the Martinsburg-Berkeley County Chamber



of Commerce was established in 1926 and has worked tirelessly to assist in creating and sustaining a strong local economy. We are a 501(c) 6 private, non-profit corporation made up of a diverse membership including 500 businesses and organizations. Our board of directors consists of 32 hard-working and dedicated members of this community. We have three paid staff members, one of whom has been onboard for 38 years. At the Chamber, we do our best to promote our local businesses and the community – after all, a strong business community is at the heart of it all.



*Downtown Martinsburg, West Virginia*

Our area is made up of businesses that work together and support each other and the community, here and beyond the borders of the Eastern Panhandle. Never was that support more evident than when devastating floods hit southern West Virginia in June 2016. Within 24 hours, our community, hours away from the devastation, organized and began collecting items to take to the areas in need. Truckloads of supplies have been donated and delivered from Berkeley County.

While we work hard to develop and provide opportunities for our business community to build their network, promote their business and develop leadership skills, one of our most important functions is as a conduit for information – both from our members to the



*An aerial view of Tabler Station, the site of a future Procter & Gamble manufacturing plant*

community and from the community to our members. While not everyone knows who we are or exactly what we do, they know that the Chamber is the place to call for information. We pride ourselves in making sure that we have the details they're looking for, whether it be information about one of our members or an event or activity happening in the area.

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Here in Berkeley County, we are fortunate, yet challenged, by our close proximity to the Washington, D.C., metro area and the fact that we are situated between Maryland and Virginia. Even with those challenges and the competition, our area has had great success in recruiting and retaining businesses to build a strong economy and solid community. What is our secret? It's the people! We are part of this fantastic team of leaders from the City of Martinsburg, County of Berkeley, Berkeley County Development Authority, Berkeley County Schools, Shepherd University, Blue Ridge Community and Technical College, University Healthcare, Governor Earl Ray Tomblin, our state and federal legislators and more. We all have the same goal in mind: working together to build and sustain this great community.

There are numerous activities, services, programs and events that the Martinsburg-Berkeley County Chamber of Commerce

provides to our members and to the people who reside here. We are proud of the 90 years that we have served this area. Our philosophy boils down to one general idea: we want businesses and our community to be successful, and we do all that we can to help make that happen. ▽