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Three prominent Northern Nevada business organizations announce intent to pursue combination of operations

(RENO, Nev.) - The Reno-Sparks Chamber of Commerce (RSCC), Northern Nevada Chamber of Commerce (NNCC), an organization formed by the merger of the Sparks Chamber of Commerce and the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and the Economic Development Authority of Western Nevada (EDAWN) announced today that after several months of exploratory discussions, the individual boards of directors have approved an agreement to pursue combining the three business organizations. The final outcome would create a cohesive, streamlined organization that can more significantly impact the quality of life and vitality of business in northern Nevada.

“Joining together will provide members with increased benefits, eliminate duplication of functions and improve the effectiveness of each entity’s broad scope of current efforts,” said Bruce Gescheider, chairman of the board of directors for the RSCC. “The strengthened organization will be the leader in promoting and growing local businesses, implementing best practices from successful business groups all over the United States.”

Over the next several months, the membership of each organization, as well as community business and civic leaders, will be provided an opportunity to identify programs and events that are most important to them while working with the three organizations to determine ways to enhance benefits, services and outcomes. Additionally, ongoing communications will ensure that members are constantly apprised on the progress and the ways to be involved in the success of the combination process.

“Just as businesses have restructured and rationalized operations in the current economic environment with the goal to be more focused and successful, community groups and government agencies must look to do the same,” said Jim Breslin, president-elect of the board of directors for NNCC, “This process will allow these organizations to not only continue to



support and improve the business community through business growth and development, but also maintain their commitment to small businesses, the Hispanic Business Network , and important Chamber leadership and education programs,.”
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A transition committee, consisting of four designated representatives from the board of directors of each organization will guide the transition process. They are Gescheider, Mary Simmons, Randy Brown and Tim Ruffin of the RSCC; Breslin, Manny Martinez, Mike Draper and Pete Copeland of the NNCC, and Russ Romine, Stephanie Kruse, Leigh Goddard and Steve Anderson from EDAWN. Dick Bostdorff, a prominent consultant in business organization and leadership, has agreed to work as the transition facilitator. The transition organization has been temporarily dubbed the “Northern Nevada Business Team (NNBT) ” for ease of reference.

“While there are still some potential challenges to work through, including potential changes in economic development funding and priorities at the government level, the structured combination process that’s been put into place should accomplish a smooth transition to a highly effective organization,” said Romine, chairman of the board of trustees for EDAWN. “Already, the common mission and strategic direction have been established.”

Fred Boyd, Interim CEO of the RSCC, in addition to his current responsibilities, will begin to serve as the transition leader, responsible for many of the transition activities, including evaluation of events, functions and facilities, infrastructure, and financial status evaluation and reporting.

Len Stevens, CEO of NNCC, in addition to his current responsibilities, will begin to assume responsibility for combined Chamber-related activities, including membership, leadership and education programs, and events.

Chuck Alvey, CEO of EDAWN, will continue in his current capacity leading economic development functions, and he will work with Boyd and Stevens to evaluate how to streamline and combine operations where it makes sense to do so. He will continue to focus on economic development and the potential changes that might come from this legislative session.

Alvey and Stevens will report up through the transition committee for all matters related to the transition process. Members of the transition committee will report back to each of the three organizations’ boards and gather input on governance, policy and strategic direction for the combined organization.

Tray Abney of the RSCC will continue to manage the governmental relations and advocacy initiatives for chamber-related functions. He will take direction from the transition leadership team, as well as the existing Reno-Sparks Chamber Political Action Committee Board and report to Stevens for administrative purposes.



As part of this process, the transition committee will ask members of each organization to maintain their current financial obligations as the consolidation process is evaluated and potentially implemented. It is anticipated that a new dues structure will be unveiled.

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“It is our expectation that we will create a streamlined, but more powerful business advocacy and support organization for the Northern Nevada area, one that is a model others will emulate,” said Bostdorff. “We anticipate that this effort to combine the organizations will span a year or more and, as we make the transition, we ask that the business community provide the same level of financial resources and time commitments that are now generously providing. That will ensure stability and as smooth a transition as possible.”

“Our sincere thanks go out to the community for all their current and future support,” said Bostdorff. “We also want to acknowledge the excellent staffs of these three successful organizations; they will remain critical to accomplishing ambitious, exciting goals.”

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