



Yelm Hosts First Economic Summit

Discussion Centers on Traffic and Utilities

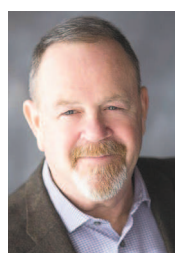
BY ANDREW KOLLAR
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Dozens of local business owners flooded the community center last Thursday to voice their concerns about owning a local business.

"We have done a lot of things at City Hall to fix (the relationship) already but we need to know what else we can do," Yelm Mayor JW Foster said. "We are trying to build the relationship between the city and local businesses."

Many business owners took

advantage of the opportunity to speak to the mayor and voice their current and future concerns regarding growth and development in the area.



Yelm Mayor JW Foster

The purpose of the meeting was for business owners to collaborate challenges that new and established small businesses face in the Yelm area. Two of the recurring issues were traffic and utilities.

Traffic

Business owners expressed frustration at the traffic problems due to the limited number of roads allowing traffic to pass through Yelm. The Yelm Bypass will greatly reduce traffic through the heart of town when complete but phase two of the construction isn't set to begin until 2021

according to the Washington Department of Transportation. Yelm Avenue traffic woes are evident to business owners and frustrations mount regarding the population growth compared to lack of infrastructure.

Foster responded by saying traffic has been a topic of conversation for the last dozen years, and in recent years, the city has created ways to get through town without having to drive on Yelm Avenue. He cited the connection of West Road to Stevens Road behind Yelm Cinemas with plans to connect Stevens Street Northwest to Cullens Street Northwest.

Foster advised community members to carpool, vanpool or take buses to keep their vehicles off the road to limit congestion.

"If you're stuck in traffic, you're part of the problem," Foster said.

Water and Sewer

Some business owners said

they are paying more than they believe is fair for connection costs and septic tank costs.

Business owners are concerned about the high cost of basic operating expenses crippling new and established businesses and believe the city could be more supportive of small businesses by subsidizing water and sewer costs.

The city of Yelm uses a water system that can provide water to many more residents and businesses than it is currently serving according to Foster. For instance, if the water output can connect to 10,000 homes and businesses and only 5,000 of them are connected, the price is going to be double what it would be if the city was at full capacity. The fewer connections, the more users will have to pay.

In previous years the city has reached out for state funds to help lower the cost for homeowners and businesses to pay for

the upkeep of the complex water and sewer facilities that are in place. Sewer and water services are paired together in the same bill, meaning customers are paying two bills in one. According to state law, utilities must be self-supporting.

Business owner Lori Shine attended the summit and said she was looking forward to the next one.

"I am one of those types that believes if you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem. I truly hope more businesses will step up and take an active role in creating resolutions and changes with the common goal of seeing our little city be a community to be proud of and prosper," she said.

The next two Economic Summits will be held in August and September.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Shop and Hop in Tenino on Saturday

Shop Hop in Tenino is free and fun for all ages. Get a passport at 10 a.m. Saturday, June 24 at the farmers market. You will receive a free goody bag full of fun gifts from participating stores.

As you travel on the Shop Hop, you will have your passport signed at each shop. You must be present to have your passport signed. All participants are eligible to enter their passport into the prize drawing for a Samsung smart TV and other great prizes.

Area Chambers Roll Out 'Shop South' Program

BY CINDY TEIXEIRA
Nisqually Valley News Correspondent

Thurston County business groups joined forces to launch a new buy local program that they hope will raise awareness about keeping local dollars in the small, rural communities of the south and east county areas.

The chambers of commerce from Yelm, Tenino and Rochester, along with other local and state organizations have been working with the Thurston County Economic Development Council to build the program. Branded as "Shop South," the buy local initiative offers businesses an extra incentive to join their local chamber

organizations. Chamber members will get free use of the logo, a larger social media presence and videos of their business to be used online and for additional promotions, said George Sharp of the TCEDC.

Benefits of the program also include advertising at a central website in addition to the chamber sites and their individual websites. The plan was crafted by South Thurston County Economic Development Initiative (STEDI) and has been in the works for about nine months,

according to Line Critchfield, executive director for the Yelm Area Chamber of Commerce.

Additional benefits for businesses that join the consortium is access to business advice and additional resources available through the partners such as business readiness, small business best practices and

how to create customer loyalty. "We're excited to remind the community the importance of supporting local business as a united group to keep their dollars local," Critchfield said.



In Tenino, "we have a lot of very unique things. Things that make Tenino what it is. We have a lot to offer," said Tenino Chamber President Tyler Whitworth, "but so does Rochester and so does Yelm."

Presenting a unified effort, Whitworth added, helps the communities maximize their resources.

"Everybody brings something different to the table. I'm pleased with the direction (Shop South) has been going," he said.

The logo will eventually be applied to window clings, shirts, shopping bags and anything else a business might want to try to get the attention of shoppers who want to support the buy local idea.

NVN Celebrates 95th Anniversary With After Hours Shindig

Did you know the Nisqually Valley News was founded in 1922 and is the oldest business in Yelm?

The Nisqually Valley News is excited to celebrate its 95th anniversary with the Yelm Area Chamber of Commerce After Hours gathering 5:07-7:30 p.m. Thursday, June 29 at the Nisqually Valley News office located behind Dairy Queen at 106 Plaza Drive N.E., Suite B2.

Staff will be on hand to answer questions and pour soda, beer and wine. It will be catered by The Cattleman restaurant featuring its barbecue (see page B5 for a feature on the restaurant's new barbecue offerings).

Come give the publisher feedback, talk to reporters, see how designers build a page, and chat with your favorite advertising department.

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