



Sedro-Woolley Means Business

City Encourages Growth

BY LINDA PARTLOW

“Sedro-Woolley Means Business” – that’s the new slogan for the city’s business-oriented Web portal – and the proof is in the growth of new and existing businesses in the area.

Although the Web portal sedro-woolleymeansbusiness.com is live, the new face of the city’s home page should be completed sometime in mid-April, according

to Eron Berg, city supervisor/city attorney for Sedro-Woolley. Other work began six years ago with the city and community investing more than \$25 million to support growth by expanding sewer capacity and building infrastructure.

“Most importantly, our community has rolled out the red carpet for new economic development,

working together to retain and attract new companies,” Berg said. “Our permitting center has adopted a quick turn around, customer service orientation to encourage development.”

The city has also been working with Skagit County, Port of Skagit, Economic Development Association of Skagit County and Sedro-Woolley Chamber of Commerce to find needed changes to benefit business growth, including changes to impact fees.

Berg adds, “The city is currently reviewing its transportation impact fees and sewer connection charges in an effort to support growth.”

“Last year, a business wanted to renovate a second-story building space, and the impact fees alone were \$55,000, and that was just cost prohibited,” said Pola Kelley, Sedro-Woolley Chamber of Commerce executive director.

Rick Qualls of Bellingham began renovating the build-

ing’s first floor at 817 Metcalf Street two years ago to create eight offices with a central suite for clients to use as business offices without the extra overhead of adding staff and office equipment. The building’s second floor hadn’t been used for about 30 years, he said.

“The city was pretty open to talking when I told them that with the impact fee, the project couldn’t go forward,” Qualls said.

The city decided to eliminate the impact fees for renovations of older buildings. Qualls plans to have an open house by mid-April.

Outside businesses are awaiting the outcome of Hospitality Focus Inc.’s proposed resort project at the former Northern State Hospital grounds, which is a county issue. “The city is working closely with Skagit County and the port on this project,” Berg said. “The next decision point is complicated and includes the state legislature.” For now, exist-

ing businesses have been key to the city’s growth.

“In recent years, I would guess that our biggest source of new growth was growth in existing businesses,” Berg said, including Janicki Industries.”

“The city also has been participating more in getting out into the public about business development,” Kelley said, adding that the city and chamber are involved in the SchmoozeCruise manufacturing tour taking place across Skagit County April 19-20, with Sedro-Woolley businesses Janicki Industries and Sound Ocean Metal Fabricators participating.