City of Benson
City Council Communication

Worksession **September 12, 2016**

To: Mayor and Council Agenda Item # 1

From: William Stephens, City Manager

Subject:

Discussion with the Southeast Arizona Economic Development Group regarding economic development in the Benson community and surrounding areas; discussion may include but not be limited to existing and potential economic development opportunities and projects being sought as well as completed and developing projects

Discussion:

George Scott of the Southeast Arizona Economic Development Group has requested a worksession with Mayor and Council.

Staff Recommendation:

Discussion only

Work Session with Benson City Council and SAEDG
Presentation by George Scott
September 12, 2016 at 6:00 pm

Created in 2007, as an alternative resource to existing government agencies, SAEDG works with existing and prospective business owners, as well as, other stakeholders in Cochise County to identify, develop, and expand opportunities within this region. SAEDG is a nonprofit 501 c 6, performing as a nimble organization, flexible and agile, working collaboratively with private and public partners, promoting business ownership and customizing support channels for business in Southeast Arizona. Currently, SAEDG's service area includes Benson, Bisbee, Bowie, Douglas, Huachuca City, Sierra Vista, Tombstone, Wilcox, and other communities throughout Cochise County. We exist as a support for our neighboring cities and serve as a clearinghouse for economic development projects for Benson and surrounding area.

SAEDG believes the prosperity of Southeast Arizona depends on the stability and vitality of all area businesses, big and small. Expanding and strengthening economic activity throughout the region ensures healthier communities. Benson and Cochise County are about to experience unprecedented economic changes as the Villages of Vigneto planned development moves forward. This project will spur economic activity, such as, business development, and population growth to the area. With these changes comes the potential of improving employment rates in the region, which have suffered in the past few years. Recognizing the value of these anticipated changes as this project moves forward, and the impact they will have on the entire region, SAEDG proposes strengthening our partnership with the City of Benson. SAEDG recommends deepening our relationship with the City, without financial commitment from the City, not as a competitor, but as an ambassador for the City. Clearly, both agencies have strategic plans and goals that are closely aligned. Now is the time to consider how we can collaborate to achieve these common goals together:

- **Develop a strategic marketing plan**
- **Develop and implement a focused tourism plan**
- **Develop a small business concierge service**

We propose establishing a collaborative partnership to assist in attracting new businesses to Benson, supporting existing business, and facilitating their transition into this community. SAEDG can work with new and existing business, in total confidentiality, assisting these businesses in the preparation of the preliminary actions/processes necessary for final approval by the City of Benson. This alone is a key element to establishing a concierge service for business. To accomplish this level of service, it is essential we build interpersonal trust among SAEDG, City employees and Council Members of the City of Benson.

The effect of this activity can result in easing the burden on the city's staff. Operating as guides, SAEDG can assist clients navigate forms, steps and processes, necessary to accomplish final approval by the city. This relationship can increase the level of satisfaction and commitment to key stakeholders and constituents within the region. Additionally, the increased cooperation and collaboration can advance effective problem solving and potentially put in place processes that will improve the economic outlook of the area.

To accomplish this level of quality customer service, and to be recognized as a Business Friendly City, we should demonstrate cooperation, collaboration and a willingness to ensure that people and/or businesses, who seek assistance are initially referred to SAEDG.

We anticipate that there will be many opportunities to assist our communities to achieve even greater success. Our organization is focused on general economic development, tourism, revitalization, and business services. Since 2007, SAEDG continues to demonstrate its commitment to not only the City of Benson, but also working closely with other cities and private and public entities throughout Cochise County. We have worked collaborative on various projects that provided direct assistance, such as:

- working cooperatively with county government to acquire Special Use Permits for the Red Horse Wind/Solar project
- assisting with Winter 2015/16 Events at the San Pedro Golf Course;
- working closely with Hudbay [Rosemont Copper] and Excelsior Mining Corporation in bringing new mining projects to Cochise County;
- assisting San Pedro Real Estate Co with a referendum to properly zone property for residential housing on the Golf Course;
- raising funds for the planting of the new trees and continuing beautification of the San Pedro Golf Course;
- participating on the SunZia Transmission Line site meetings, this project will bring 100's of jobs and construction work to the area;
- working with potential tenant/businesses for the Benson Municipal airport;
- working with SSVEC and other E/D organizations to support the solar project now being completed at the Apache Generating Station;
- initiating a Golf Tournament in November featuring local vineyards, dedicated to thanking sponsors of the tree project;
- developing other community events, such as softball tournaments, the Airport open house and continuing Winter Visitor events to benefit the City of Benson

SAEDG, its leadership, and the communities it represents, have unlimited prospects for growth. By way of a commitment from the City Staff, Council Members, public and private partnerships and the community, we can, and will, make a difference in the economic landscape of Benson and Cochise County. We believe that as ambassador and strategic partner, SAEDG can support the City of Benson in achieving their Economic Development goals. Now is the time to consider how we can collaborate and affiliate with the City.

How do we accomplish this collaboration/affiliation? SAEDG advocates a commitment or resolution from the City Council, which articulates that the City's administrators and staff collaborate with SAEDG on economic development endeavors in this region, such as, but not limited to, the following activities:

1. referring new and existing business clients seeking assistance to SAEDG for guidance
2. ensuring that there is transparency in all communication and dealings in economic development activities
3. encouraging the development of private/public partnerships to improve overall economic development efforts in the area

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At this time I would like to open up the conversation with Council and Staff with any questions comments suggestions they might have.

SAEDG CURRENT AFFILIATIONS

SAEDG has worked cooperatively, on economic development projects, with, but not limited to the following organizations:

- Benson San Pedro Valley Chamber of Commerce
- Bowie Chamber of Commerce
- Willcox Chamber of Commerce and Agricultural Center
- Tucson Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.
- Local and Regional City Governments
- Arizona Association for Economic Development [AAED - Statewide organization]
- Arizona Regional Economic Development Foundation [AREDF]
- Southern Arizona Business Collation [SABC]
- Southeast Arizona Government Organization [EAGO]
- Cochise County Government
- Cochise College Small Business Development Center [SBDC]
- Cochise College Center for Economic Research [CER]
- Arizona Commerce Authority [ACA – Statewide organization]

Current SAEDG Organization's Advisory/Administrative Support

Deb DiBiasie

Deb provides marketing assistance. She also develops funding solutions that support initiatives designed to promote awareness and growth of SAEDG for Cochise County.

JoAnne Ehasz

Practiced economic development in rural Wisconsin for 15 years, earned national economic development certification, CED, in 2001. Her role in SAEDG, at this point, is in an advisory capacity.

Isabel Hildebrandt

Retired from California Community Colleges, with Economic and Workforce Development project development, management and implementation. Isabel provides administrative assistance for SAEDG.

Small Business Partner

Kirsten Smith

Born and raised in Southern Arizona, Kirsten is a small business owner in Benson—KS Event Services and Kaptured Smiles Photography. Her degree in Event Planning with Specialty in non-profit fundraising makes her a great asset to the organization in planning large scale events for SAEDG.

SAEDG CURRENT AFFILIATIONS

SAEDG BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Larry Dempster – President

Retired as Chevron's corporate manager of Employee Management Development and Organization Effectiveness. Larry is a Cochise County rancher and businessman, is actively involved as President of SAEDG and serves as Vice President and Board Member of the Arizona Western Heritage Foundation.

David DiPeso - Vice-President

David's business experience as a loan officer and appraiser for Farmers Home Administration, owning and operating the Red Bird Ranch in Cochise County (for 12 years) and since 2000 owning and operating DiPeso Real Estate and Appraisal allows David to offer varied business perspectives for numerous civic organizations.

Cindy Batten – Treasurer

Cindy is Assistant Vice President and Branch Manager of the local National Bank of Arizona branch. She stays involved in the community by volunteering with various sports related events through the local schools and is currently very active in the Arizona Roadrunner travel softball organization. She is now serving as Treasurer of SAEDG.

George Scott - Executive Director

In the summer of 2007 George and a group of local businessmen formed the Southeast Arizona Economic Development Group to help promote business in Cochise County.

Members at Large

Judy Thompson -Board Member
Gil Lusk - Board Member
Leslie E Thompson - Board Member

Advisory Members

Geoff Oldfather - AZ G&T Cooperative
Mark Fenn - Fenn Homes- owner
Jerry DeGrazia - Developer - San Pedro Properties