

EDC no more

New organization will take over functions

By Jeanne Davant

The Manitou Springs Economic Development Council is history.

With a unanimous vote Tuesday night, the Manitou Springs City Council passed a resolution dissolving the EDC. It will become part of a new organization called the Manitou Springs Chamber of Commerce, Visitors Bureau and Office of Economic Development.

The members of the Chamber voted to merge with the EDC at a meeting Nov. 11. The Manitou Springs Metropolitan District also concurred with dissolving the EDC at its November meeting.

The EDC was formed in 2002 to help spearhead the downtown improvement project. For years, it operated under the direction of Kitty Clemens, who left the organization last year.

"The EDC did a wonderful job and helped shepherd us through the difficulties of the downtown project, (as well as) many other things," Mayor Marc Snyder said Tuesday. "It was an indispensable job they did for us ... It is not without a heavy heart that I see this, because I want to recognize the work they did. But having one organization to deal with will make our jobs easier, and I think it will be better for the business community, (which) will be able to speak with one voice."

"With every organization, there comes a time when it will fade away or evolve into something else," Councilman Rick Barry said. "A great amount of thoughtful conversation went into this. We need to wrap our arms around this new organization."

The impetus for the consolidation came during last year's budget deliberations, when a looming deficit forced Council to look closely at every penny. Some Council members expressed reservations about the overlapping functions of the city's economic development organizations and the city's ability to continue funding them.

That spurred the hiring of a consultant to interview the boards of directors of the Chamber, EDC and BID and Council members to determine their views on funding and coordination problems and seek solutions.

The interviews highlighted duplications in services among the three organizations, a feeling that promotional efforts needed to be brought up to date and a desire to reconcile differences by forming a new organization.

The organizations formed a working group last spring and started crafting a plan for consolidating functions. While the BID provided input through a representative on the working group, that organization was contractually unable to be a part of the new association.

The new organization will operate like a visitors bureau to promote Manitou Springs across the country, and some of the functions of the EDC likely will be part of its mission. By-laws are still in development.

According to a document presented to Chamber members before last week's vote, Chamber board indicated it expects both professional-level Chamber staff members to be offered one-year contracts by the new organization. Chamber Director Leslie Lewis, however, has said she does not want to be considered for the job of Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the new organization.

The working group proposed that the new organization would be funded by membership fees, city funding from the camping and lodging tax, a la carte membership services such as

banner ads on the Web site and special promotions, and other contracted services, such as a contract with the BID for administrative services and/or advertising. The plan anticipates total revenues of about \$471,000.

The new organization would spend that money on advertising and marketing, events, operating costs and salaries and benefits for personnel, including a salary of approximately \$60,000 for the COO.

The new organizations board of directors will formulate the final budget. The groups hope to have the new organization in place by Jan. 1.

Fees waived for Salvation Army dinners

Also Tuesday, Council waived use fees for Memorial Hall for the Salvation Army's 17th annual Thanksgiving dinner Nov. 25 and Christmas dinner Dec. 25.

Sponsor Andy Wells said 450 people attended last year's Thanksgiving dinner and 550 came to Christmas dinner. He expects more people this year at both events, during which canned food and clothing will be given away.

Councilman Matt Carpenter said he had raised \$400 and, with checks in hand, offered to pay the fees for the two events.

"While I feel it would be difficult to reject the generosity of Mr. Carpenter and his friends ... I don't see anything problematic with offering our hall to our community on a holiday," Councilwoman Aimee Cox said. "It belongs to the people who live here." Snyder said he thought "these events would fit under our waiver policy. They are of great benefit to the community."

Councilwoman Ingrid Richter suggested that the \$400 raised by Carpenter be given to the Salvation Army to be used "as they see fit." In seconding Barry's motion to approve the fee waiver, Richter asked that Carpenter contact the people who donated the funds and determine if they would prefer to contribute to the event or have their money returned.

Council approved the fee waiver with a 6-1 vote, with Carpenter dissenting. Carpenter has consistently opposed requests to waive fees, stating that he was concerned about the loss of those funds in tight budget times and the fact that a new fee waiver policy is under consideration.

Council postponed another fee waiver request until it takes up the new policy on Dec. 7. That request came from Philip Selva, who applied for a waiver of \$ 1,300 for use of Memorial Hall for t'ai chi classes from 7 to 9 p.m. every Wednesday during the first half of 2011.

In other business, Council...

- Approved a contract with KRW Associates to conduct an executive search for a city administrator. The city hopes to have a new administrator in place by March 1.
- Adopted the Red Mountain Open Space Land Stewardship Plan, which sets out goals for protecting the ecology and managing recreational use of the parcel.
- Approved the first reading of the appropriation ordinance for next year's \$8.7 million city budget, which anticipates General Fund revenues of \$4.86 million and an ending General Fund balance of \$204,153. Council also OK'd on first reading an ordinance setting next year's mill levy at 15.750 mills, an amount unchanged from this year's mill levy.
- Invited community members to offer suggestions for the Five-Year Capital Plan at a hearing to be held at 7 p.m. Dec. 7 in City Hall. The Finance Department has consolidated departmental requests into a proposed five-year plan, which Council will consider Dec. 7. Citizens can offer their views on the expenditures proposed in the plan and may propose additional projects, such as road improvements. Copies of the plan are available at City Hall.
- Proclaimed Nov. 26-Dec. 3 Buy Local Week and designated Nov. 27 as Small Business Saturday. Black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving, also kicks off Manitou's Hometown Holidays. The annual Hometown Holiday event features free hot chocolate and cider, music by

local artist Xanthe, fireworks and the arrival of Santa at 5 p.m. at the Town Clock. During the weekend, many local merchants will be offering specials, and shoppers who present receipts from local stores at the Chamber office will be entered into a drawing for a \$500 shopping spree. Between Nov. 26 and Feb. 11, \$75 worth of receipts from local businesses brought to the Chamber office gets you a voucher for a free lift ticket to Monarch Mountain.

[Return to Article Index](#)