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GRAYS HARBOR CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND GRAYS HARBOR EDC BOARDS VOTE TO MERGE

August 18 and 19 in the year 2011 will be remembered as historic days in Grays Harbor County. There will be a monumental change in the life of the Grays Harbor Chamber of Commerce (Chamber) and the Grays Harbor Economic Development Council (EDC). In April 2011, the Chamber and EDC began a process to explore merging these two strong business organizations. A "Transition Team," co-chaired by Dr. Ed Brewster, President of Grays Harbor College, and Dennis Long, President of Bank of Pacific, and several "Task Forces" were created to explore the viability and process should such a merger take place.

On Thursday, August 18 and Friday, August 19, respectively, the EDC and Chamber boards met and heard the report of the Transition Team and the Task Forces. The work accomplished by the groups was extraordinary. Board members present at each of their respective meetings voted unanimously to "formally approve the merger," of the Grays Harbor Economic Development Council and the Grays Harbor Chamber of Commerce, with a joint meeting of the boards to follow to adopt the "Transition Plan." Randy Ross, Chair of the EDC said, "We are looking forward to a combined organization speaking with one voice for the benefit of our members and the community."

Much progress has already been made on the Transition Plan, including a new name, mission, vision, and stated values of the new organization. Also, progress has been made toward the creation of the Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, board structure, organizational structure, dues, financials, and benefits to members. A date for the merger to become effective has not yet been set, but is expected to be completed before the end of the year.

The merger of the Chamber and EDC comes fifty years after the merger of the Aberdeen and Hoquiam Chambers of Commerce. In 1961 the progressive leaders of these two Chambers recognized the incongruity of the two organizations performing duplicative services while competing for the same leaders', members' and businesses', time and financial resources.

A business forum is scheduled for September 27 at noon at the Port of Grays Harbor meeting room to discuss the merger and Transition Plan. Please RSVP to the Chamber for this luncheon event. Members of both organizations and the public are invited.

Leonard Barnes, Chair of the Grays Harbor Chamber announced that the new organization will be unveiled and be the focus at this Fall's Leaders' Banquet. He said, "We will celebrate the merger of the Grays Harbor Chamber with the EDC to become a stronger, better organization as one single entity." The banquet is scheduled for October 14 at 6:00 PM at the Quinault Beach Resort and Casino, and reservations are required for this annual event.