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A blue banner advertisement for Jetway Chevrolet. On the left, a yellow car is shown driving on a road that curves into a circular frame. To the right of the car, the text reads "Jetway Chevrolet", "2525 Reno Highway - Fallon, NV", and "(800) 649-2913". On the far right, a starburst graphic contains the text "Check out our HUGE VEHICLE INVENTORY!".

Jetway Chevrolet
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Chamber moves forward following arrest of former employee

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The Fallon Chamber is looking forward to the future and the prospect of returning value to its members following the arrest former employee Jeanna Arnold on charges of embezzlement.

Outgoing Chamber President Mark Feest said he is pleased an arrest was made and is hopeful the alleged crime will be fully prosecuted.

He said some people asked if the \$22,000 that was allegedly stolen was returned, would the Chamber consider foregoing prosecution, but Feest said that doesn't reflect the mindset of the membership.

"It is disappointing to have put your trust in someone and have them disappoint you, but we have new internal controls and a new employee and are looking to the future and to move forward," Feest said.

Feest said new measures have been put in place to avoid a similar situation in the future.

Those measures include changing the access procedures to the Chamber's bank accounts, instilling more accountability, no longer issuing credit and debit cards to staff, bank statements going directly to the treasurer, checks requiring two signatures and no petty cash box is kept anymore.

Chamber Secretary-Treasurer Frank Woodliff said he is confident of the Fallon Police Department's investigation into the embezzlement charges and that they "are working their way through the process."

That process has been somewhat delayed by the time required to get supporting paperwork from financial institutions and other agencies to support the investigation.

"Our bank account is now in pretty good shape," said Woodliff. He said the bank returned the money made on the Chamber's credit cards back in October on a "provisional basis" and he has been reviewing the books since then.

Woodliff said the Chamber's board has given new Chamber Executive Director Eric Grimes a clear mission: to concentrate on the items necessary to make the membership strong again and to reinforce and emphasize rebuilding confidence in the Chamber.

"We want to be prudent with our members, bring justice and to provide benefits to our members," Woodliff said.

For his part, Grimes said he brings integrity to the position as someone who is not new to the Fallon area.

"I'm refocusing on our one core mission which is to support, promote and develop business in Fallon," he said. "The Chamber is in the business of supporting business so that is what we are going to do."

Grimes said he is pushing to make the Chamber's monthly luncheons get back to providing members with information that is important to them.

Upcoming luncheon programs include a presentation on identity theft by the Churchill County District Attorney's office (January), motivational speaker Donna Hartley (February) and a leadership seminar on training and effectively utilizing employees (March).

The next monthly Chamber membership lunch is Thursday, Dec. 21 at noon at the Fallon Convention Center. A special holiday musical program will be presented by local schoolchildren and Santa, sponsored by the Fallon Star Press.

Grimes said the monthly chamber newsletter will become quarterly and be filled with articles written by local experts on items pertinent to business.



Cari Norcutt – President (PROVIDED TO THE RENO GAZETTE-JOURNAL)

"Who better to describe the nuances of doing business in Fallon than Fallon business owners," Grimes said.

Another change being implemented at the Chamber is to run the organization's main events (Cantaloupe Festival, Taste of Fallon, awards banquet) by committee rather than have the chamber staff be solely responsible for their execution.

"My focus will be on membership and running the office," Grimes said. "I hope I can make the business community have faith in their chamber and bring credibility back so businesses feel good about being a part of the Chamber."

Grimes said the Chamber's board has given him their verbal support to carry out his goals.

"They've given me carte blanche to make changes and get things turned around for the Chamber." ¶

Incoming Chamber President Cari Norcutt, who was elected on Wednesday, said she is excited about the new board, the new year and starting over from scratch following the troubles of late this year. ¶

"We are going to get back to mixers, our awards banquet which is March 17 and ribbon cuttings," she said. Looking out for the overall reputation of the Chamber and bringing it back to the community is her board's ambition, she said.

Board members for 2007 elected this week include Norcutt, president; Steve Young, vice president; Woodliff, secretary/treasurer; board members Art Crowder, Aaron Guillen, Feest (past president) and Rick Lattin; alternate board members Susan Whole, Sue Frey and Shelley Christensen; Grant Mills, agricultural representative and Navy representative Master Chief Casey Forsch.

For information on membership, upcoming meetings and the newsletter, contact Grimes during business hours at 423-2544. Norcutt asks that anyone with ideas on how to improve the Chamber contact her at Berney Realty, 423-4230.