Satsop Business Park CEO Announces Retirement

Local News

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ELMA, Wash. - After 11 years at the helm of the award-winning Satsop Business Park, Tami Garrow, CEO, officially gave notice of her decision to retire next spring, during Tuesday’s board meeting of the Grays Harbor Public Development Authority, the Park’s governing board.
“This was a purely personal decision, but not a hard one,” said Garrow, 53. She and husband John Mertz, 64, plan to travel more, work less and spend time with parents, kids and grandkids.
“I love my job, my staff and this Park, but the time is right for me to move on, and I am blessed to be able to do so. I’ve worked since I was 13, manning the counter at the Red Rooster grocery store in Humptulips, waiting tables to pay for college, and, for the past 30 years, working in the ‘economic development trenches’ of rural Washington trying to make a difference, the last 13 here at the Park. It has been a terrific experience.”I love my job, my staff and this Park, but the time is right for me to move on, and I am blessed to be able to do so. - Tammy GarrowGarrow said that she plans to work through the end of March 2013, but wanted to give the board plenty of time to plan for her departure.“She’s done an outstanding job, just an incredible job. She’s brought the Satsop Business Park into the 21st Century,” said Jack Thompson, a longtime board member who helped hire Garrow. “She has really been responsible for putting the Park on the map throughout the county, the state of Washington and beyond,” he said.

Garrow, who has been working at the Park since it’s inception in July 1999, became CEO in early 2001. She said she’s glad to be leaving the Park in such good shape. Not only is it debt free with more than $6 million in reserves, her legacy includes several new and renovated buildings, new roads and other vital infrastructure, with a new sewer system connection on its way.
Garrow said she’s especially proud that the Park has had 10 straight years of clean financial audits. She has been credited with guiding the Park through the growing pains of its early years, turning its finances around and building a solid foundation for future growth.
It’s not just the financial picture that has improved at the Park. Over the years she and her staff converted many former nuclear power plant structures to commercial building use, as well as constructing new office and manufacturing buildings. Under her direction, the Park’s first comprehensive master plan was developed, miles of new roads were constructed and an entire telecommunication infrastructure was built from the ground up. Other utilities, including water and sewer, a chlorination plant and a filtration plant were also built. In all, more than $50 million in improvements to the Park were made during her tenure – much of it largely financed through grants and loans. “We literally built the proverbial shining city on a hill,” she said, “out of an unfinished, hidden asset.”
Much of this success has not gone unnoticed with Garrow and Satsop Business Park garnering many accolades over the years.
Earlier this month the Satsop Business Park’s collaborative forestry program with Grays Harbor College received the 2011 Pacific Northwest Champion Award from the U.S. Forest

Stewardship Council for the innovative way its 1,200 acres of forest are managed. Past honors have included the 2005 Excellence in Rural Economic Development Award from the U.S. Dept. of Commerce, and the 2004 Governor’s Economic Development Award.
In 2005, Garrow received the Woman of Influence Award from the Business Examiner publishing group.
A graduate of the University of Puget Sound in English literature and business, before Garrow began at Satsop, she served as Executive Director of the Grays Harbor Economic Development Council, the Business Development Director for the Grays Harbor PUD, the Planning/Real Estate director for the Port of Grays Harbor and a Program manager for the State Dept. of Community Development (now Commerce). She also served as City Planner for Hoquiam, her hometown, and worked for Grays Harbor College and WSU in a collaborative partnership.
“Grays Harbor has benefited from Tami’s leadership at the Park through her tireless dedication to developing a public asset and inviting investment and job creation for our citizens,” said board member Shelli Hopsecger.
As for Garrow, who still has 10 months left at her job, she wants the public to know that “There really is no more welcoming, business-friendly place in Washington State than Satsop Business Park. You won’t find anyone who will work harder than we will, to help your business succeed. Not only do we try to attract businesses here, but once they’re here we take on the role of advocate. We’re always asking, ‘What do you need to be wildly successful, and what can we do to make it happen?’ And then we go do it.”
Satsop Business Park is a 1,700-acre mixed-use business and technology park located in scenic Grays Harbor County in Southwest Washington just 30 minutes from Olympia and the I-5 corridor. It is home to more than 30 businesses, offers 440 acres of developed, pad-ready land and buildings supported by super-sized infrastructure and surrounded by 1,200 acres of sustainable managed forestland.The Park is managed by the Grays Harbor Public Development Authority, a public corporation whose mission is to create new jobs and investment for the region. More information on Satsop Business Park can be found at www.Satsop.com.