

NEWY Growth Alliance receives support from City Council

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The Energy Capital Economic Development Coalition has set up the NEWY Growth Alliance with Sheridan and Buffalo to attract new businesses to northeast Wyoming.

CEO Phil Christopherson said the alliance is an effort among the three cities to give themselves a larger overall footprint to get the attention of larger businesses and recruit them to the area.

Christopherson has said that large businesses won't even look at a community that has a population of less than 50,000. Campbell County only has 47,000 people. But by combining with Sheridan and Buffalo, the NEWY Growth Alliance shows a population of 103,000.

"It's about new business development. We want to recruit new businesses here," Christopherson told the Gillette City Council at a workshop before the council's Tuesday meeting. "But we're missing the size requirements. This allows us to get on their map."

The partnership structure among the three cities is ongoing, with a joint government and a memorandum of understanding on its way, Christopherson said. In total, the effort will require \$200,000 to set up, which will be split among the cities. Christopherson asked for \$75,000 each from Gillette and Sheridan and \$50,000 from Buffalo.

The costs include the set-up costs in each community, the work with local and national media to get the word to industry that the effort exists, as well as an administrative contract that would set up a headquarters and a staff in one of the three cities.

"It has to be universal for everything we do," Christopherson said.

The money that would fund the NEWY Growth Alliance would come out of the special projects funding for the city, where economic development has historically received its funding from the city, City Administrator Carter Napier said.

The NEWY Growth Alliance also could expand from just the three communities, allowing other northeast Wyoming communities to join in the effort. Christopherson said the qualifications would be that each city has its own organization of economic development, but the three cities that started it would remain together as the leaders.

The City Council was largely supportive of the program and the effort will continue to push for setting up the organization.

“This is exactly what I’m hearing from the people of Gillette,” Councilman Tim Carsrud said.

“Working to diversify the community and bring new businesses in.”

“The time to do this was five years ago,” Christopherson added. “But the second best time is now.”