

Contact:
Kent Patton
Kent.Patton@snoco.org
425-388-3883



Snohomish County Executive Somers Names James Henderson Chief of Economic and Workforce Development Initiatives

Will focus on innovative, integrated economic and workforce development strategies

EVERETT, Wash., January 22, 2020 – Today, Executive Dave Somers announced the appointment of James Henderson as the first Chief of Economic and Workforce Development Initiatives for Snohomish County. Henderson will join the county from his role as the Chief Operating Officer of Greater Seattle Partners (GSP), the largest economic development organization in the state and the Puget Sound region’s first public-private partnership created to advance economic growth and competitiveness by attracting new investment, promoting international trade, and growing industry clusters. This is a new position for the county, building upon recent transformative economic development efforts, including the launch of commercial air service at Paine Field, a strategic repositioning of tourism promotion, and a focus on marketing high opportunity areas across the county.

“James will play a key leadership role in Snohomish County, helping us to integrate economic and workforce development to make us the gold standard in the nation,” said Executive Somers. “We are creating an innovative system, building on the success of our previous efforts and strong partnerships to position us for the future. Not only will this help us maintain our prosperity but also compete globally for jobs and investments. Snohomish County was one of the founders of Greater Seattle Partners, and we appreciate their support for our vision of a seamless regional economic development effort creating more opportunities for all.”

A native of Washington, James played a leading role in the creation and start-up phase of GSP. He also oversaw day-to-day operations in this \$4.5 million organization. Prior to his GSP role, James was the Economic Development Director for the City of Bellevue, launching a series of innovative programs that helped Bellevue successfully expand and diversify their economy, including the Innovation Triangle, Creative Edge, Startup425, and their Destination Development Plan. James also worked in leadership positions in Washington, D.C. and Texas.

“What makes Greater Seattle Partners valuable is our strong collaboration with our private and government partners along with the great talent we have recruited,” said Brian McGowan, CEO of Greater Seattle Partners. “GSP is a strong and growing organization that is poised to support the region’s economic growth. The expertise and leadership that James will bring to Snohomish County aligns perfectly with the goals of GSP, supporting economic growth and job creation across our entire region. I envision this transition as another way that we will become even stronger in the service, visibility and

connections we can provide. I am excited for this opportunity to further strengthen our partnership with Snohomish County, since it will allow us to continue advancing our regional work. In the global competition for investments, jobs, and talent, Snohomish County is making all the right decisions.”

“There is great potential in Snohomish County, and I hope to seize every possible opportunity,” said Henderson. “I may be taking on a new role, but my energy remains focused on helping create jobs and strengthen our local economy. I am looking forward to doing this for the residents of Snohomish County. With one of the most educated and talented workforces, Snohomish County is both dynamic and diverse with all the ingredients to grow successful businesses and employees.”

“All businesses, large and small, depend on a healthy economy and a trained workforce,” said Brad Tilden, Chairman and CEO of Alaska Airlines. “I know even more good things are to come for Snohomish County. They are poised to take the next major step in economic growth, particularly since commercial air service started last year.”

“James has been a key leader for our region and instrumental in the launch of Greater Seattle Partners,” said Former Governor Christine Gregoire. “He has helped across the region, and I am pleased his talents are staying local. He will help us ensure that the benefits of our current growth are shared by all. James is the right person at the right time for this leadership role in Snohomish County.”

“James is respected both across the region and nationally for his work in economic development, particularly business recruitment, retention, and expansion,” said Kendee Yamaguchi, Snohomish County Executive Director. “We are building a strong team for the county to ensure that we are well positioned for anything the future may hold. The experience James brings coupled with the county’s strengths will undoubtedly be our not-so-secret weapon to seize upon any and all opportunities that may come.”

James will start work on January 27. He will be responsible for overseeing the workforce development system in Snohomish County and providing additional strategic leadership in economic development. He has an undergraduate degree from the University of Washington and graduate degrees from George Washington University and the University of Denver.

###