A focus for the City Manager over the next few years will be to ramp up the City’s economic development program. Currently, much effort is placed in business recruitment and retention. The City is now working on the development of a 74-acre business park at the Airport and also a grant for EDA money to undertake an economic plan or strategy for the airport area.

Another effort under way is working with Porterville College to develop a center for entrepreneurship and innovation to support local business start-ups.

Though other areas and program development as summarized above, expectations are often set in terms of business recruitment. During Congressman Nunes’ recent agricultural tour while at Ruiz Foods, Mr. Fred Ruiz stated that one of the reasons for the firm locating in Dinuba was visits by Dinuba elected officials.

Therefore, it appears beneficial that the City should increase business visits by local officials. These would be trips out of Porterville to business sites where Porterville is on the “short list” for a project. There may also be visits to the headquarters of businesses currently within Porterville under the heading “business retention”.

The most immediate trip is proposed to be to Bentonville, Arkansas. This is the location of WalMart Headquarters. The focus of the trip would be the Distribution Center and is planned for August 3 through 7, 2006.

Future trips should be scheduled for other Council members. It is suggested that a process be approved whereby the City Manager notifies, confidentially, the City Council of “short list” placements for economic development. The Mayor and Mayor-Pro Tem as an ad hoc committee may select a council member(s) to represent the City on any visit to the company’s sites outside of Porterville. Confidentially, the Manager would notify the Council of the delegation, which would include Council representation and also staff.
It is proposed that for confidential economic development travel outside of California, this process would supplement the normal Council practice of requiring all out of state travel to be specifically approved.

Because of recent implementation of AB 1234, and a new set of limitations it provides, the City Attorney is reviewing this proposal and will be able to comment on it at the Council Meeting.

**Recommendation:**

1. Approve the visit of Messrs Hamilton and Longley to Bentonville to discuss the distribution center.

2. Approve the procedure for economic development travel outlined above.