

Al Smith stepping down as CEO of Fresno Chamber

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After a decade at the organization's helm, Al Smith is retiring from the Fresno Chamber of Commerce. Al Smith, president and CEO of the Greater Fresno Area Chamber of Commerce, will retire at the end of this year.

In a phone interview with *The Business Journal*, Smith confirmed this morning that he had submitted his resignation to the Chamber's board of directors at their most recent meeting.

Smith, 77, took the top job at the Chamber in September 2006. "I stepped in as an interim and was actually supposed to only be here four months," he said. "It's hard to believe it's now ten years later."

"I gave the board my notice that at the end of the year, I intend to hang it up," Smith said Friday morning. "I've been here ten years and it's been a thrill. But at some point you start looking for new hills to climb. It's been productive but it's time for the board to start looking for someone new."

Smith said Chamber officials would be issuing a formal press release confirming his departure later today.

A native of New Orleans, Smith spent 47 years as an executive in the broadcast industry, coming to the Valley from Los Angeles in 1988 to run what were then seven former CBS radio stations including KMJ.

"Legends and Legacies," Smith's on-air vignettes spotlighting Central Valley history and folklore, remains a popular feature each morning on KMJ radio.

After winding up his career in broadcasting, Smith was actually lured out of retirement by local business leaders when

the Chamber's former CEO, Steve Geil left the organization.

The Chamber, which has a new board of directors slated to assume their positions in January, is expected to begin a search for Smith's replacement immediately.

"If they find somebody earlier, I can leave tomorrow," Smith said. "If they don't I can stay a little longer. But I wanted to give them plenty of notice."

Smith said he and his wife, Janette, will remain in Fresno.

"I plan to find new projects. I still have a lot of things I want to do and still want to be involved in the community," he said. "It's not like I am going to sit on the front porch in a rocking chair. I found out how boring that was the first time around."

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