

## Stinger Welding to build new facility City council gives go-ahead for \$4 million expansion

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### **The Coolidge City Council has approved a rezoning request and an accompanying site plan to accommodate a major expansion for Stinger Welding, a steel bridge fabricating firm located along Arizona Highway 87.**

The council voted unanimously last week to rezone 39 acres of Stinger Welding property at the southeast corner of Highway 87 and Randolph Road. The company is planning to construct a \$4 million bridge fabricating facility on the land, which is across the street from its current building at 4248 N. Highway 87.

The project will create an additional 50 jobs at Stinger Welding, increasing the company's total number of employees from 150 to 200.

"It is a 150,000-square-foot building that is going to have three crane bays in it," Stinger Welding President Carl J. Douglas said about the new facility. "It will be the main bridge fabricating portion of the company. We'd like to break ground before the end of the year and be into the deal within six months after that, by June of next year."

Stinger Welding also will continue to utilize its existing 60,000-square-foot facility.

"We're going to leave our expansion joint and miscellaneous metal fabrication in this building here," Douglas said Friday during an interview at his office. "We sell expansion joints across the whole United States."

The city council voted on Aug. 11 to rezone 12.108 acres of the 39.43-acre Stinger Welding parcel from agricultural to commercial (C-3). The remaining 27.322 acres were rezoned from agricultural to general industrial (I-2).

"Last year the council, as part of its general plan update, re-designated this parcel for industrial development as a general plan designation in anticipation of the need for additional employment-generating uses in the city," said C. Alton Bruce, growth management director for the city of Coolidge. "Mr. Douglas and Stinger Welding cooperated by coming forward with a request to rezone this to put about 158,000 square feet of building on this site to accommodate the expansion of the Stinger Welding operation. The proposal for the rezoning includes C-3 along the Highway 87 frontage, and then the balance of the site is rezoned to industrial use for the expansion operation."

Douglas said the new facility will be constructed on the 27 acres that have been rezoned as industrial.

"As we planned it, we tried to keep the 27 acres so we have plenty of space around it," Douglas said. "Currently we work on about 4 acres, and we're just busting at the seams."

Having the new facility will allow Stinger Welding to pursue contracts to build more bridges.

"It's just a matter of expanding," Douglas said. "We are looking at larger steel bridges. We are currently building a 3-million-pound bridge for the San Francisco Oakland Bay Bridge, and there are quite a few more large sections of that. And also there are other steel bridge projects around the western United States that are coming up that we want to be involved in."

As part of its agreement with the city, Stinger Welding will help pay for the paving of Randolph Road and also will

build a block wall around the 27-acre project site.

"The city wants us to put up a block wall, and we're more than happy to do it," Douglas said. "It helps us with our security, too."

A retention area for rain runoff will be created on the east side of the site.

"They will be directing the drainage to a retention pond on the east boundary of the property adjacent to the tracks," Bruce said.

The land where the new building will be constructed was recently annexed into the city limits. Stinger Welding's existing facility is located on unincorporated Pinal County land, but Douglas hopes to begin the procedure to get that acreage annexed into Coolidge as well.

Douglas, a native of Florence who now lives just outside of Coolidge, founded Stinger Welding on July 1, 1996. "It has exceeded my expectations," he said.

Douglas said that he attended college for two years after high school and then began working in construction.

"I've been self-taught over the years working these kinds of projects," Douglas said. "When I got out of college I went into major, heavy construction and ended up running a lot of big projects around the western United States.

"I spent 15 years with the company that built the CAP Canal out here," he said, referring to Ball, Ball and Brosamer, a heavy construction firm based in California. "I was a project superintendent. They did freeways, bridges, canals, runways. When they went out of business, it forced me to have to do something on my own, and this is what I did."

Douglas created the Stinger Welding company in 1996, remaining in heavy construction, but branching out into the steel market. "I basically came into this with very little experience in steel fabrication and just started picking it up as we went along," he said.

Douglas describes Stinger Welding as an AISC (American Institute of Steel Construction) certified major bridge shop with a Fracture Critical Endorsement.

"It is an endorsement on our major bridge certification," Douglas said. "It basically tells our customers that we're capable of making welds that will hold up big, big structures."

Stinger Welding is currently building a 3-million pound bridge that will be used for an estimated five to seven years as a temporary route for the San Francisco Oakland Bay Bridge while a new, permanent structure is constructed. The Coolidge company needs to complete its work on the temporary bridge by March 2009, and the state of California plans to install it during the Labor Day weekend of 2009.

"We're essentially sending them a giant erector set," said Gary Gardner, QA/QC manager for Stinger Welding.

Douglas envisions more of these types of major bridge projects in Stinger Welding's future.

"I fully expect this company to keep growing," he said.