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92nd KZGN News Talking Points editorial
By: Tom Wiknich

The city did the right thing approving their intent to participate in the new groundwater sustainability agency.

Actually, the city did more than that. As recommended by Stan Ratorja from the public, they added one important word to the letter of intent. Instead of the letter saying the city will participate in the new agency, they added one word that may not seem too important to most people. They added the word: voting. Instead of the letter just saying, “The city will participate as a member of the board,” it says: the city will participate as a voting member of the board.”

This changes the prospect concerning where this board should be located. This puts the county on notice that the city wants the board located here in the Indian Wells Valley, not in Bakersfield or anywhere else. If the Indian Wells Valley water district does the same, it will support that we want this agency based here. This new agency could be housed in City Hall, where there is plenty of room. Plus it has the council chambers available for public meetings. They also have the capability to televise the meetings. City Hall is the perfect location for this new agency.

In other discussions, I recommended that the city really energize the process and take the lead on the issue. Take the lead in not an authoritative basis, but as a facilitator basis. They should advocate to have supervisor Gleason, an elected member from the water district, and the mayor or a councilperson, actually lead the way by calling for a start of public meetings to discuss this new agency. While these three entities will likely be not the only members of the agency, they can still start the public discussion of it. Other potential members could join in on these start-up meetings. It’s not too soon to start these meetings. I suggested that they could start by having a town hall. That suggestion was well received and supported by the council. They suggested that they would be pursuing that concept.

There are still many questions that need to be taken up and answered about this new agency. There are a lot of decisions that need to be made. For example, people from the public want the members to not just be current elected members wearing dual hats with another organization. They advocate for an entirely separate board elected by the people of the valley. One concern stated by Mike Neal gave this scenario. If the city council did something wrong, the people could do a recall to remove those members that did the offense in one election. But if the dual-hatted members of the new agency did something wrong and the people wanted them removed, it would probably require separate recall elections in all the offending bodies. This idea has merit as well. We need to look into this further and see if this can be done.

In a separate item the council discussed last night, there was discussion as to new requirements for people getting hired by the city. The main emphasis was the city manager recommending that the educational requirements for people to be qualified to be hired for various management positions, that certain degrees and state licenses be required. Lori Acton challenged the degree requirement aspects. She felt a person with lot of experience but without a degree could be just as effective in the position. She felt that a young person just coming out of college at 24 with a bachelor’s degree has no experience. Dennis Spear defended the degree requirement of bachelor’s degree or higher as being a minimum requirement. Most managerial positions would require certain experience along with the degree requirement. He also cited that over the last few years there has been some controversy in the hiring of certain people. This was due to the poor wording in the job descriptions of when degrees are required for certain positions. I agree with manager Spear. When it comes to filling managerial positions, it’s not just a degreed person that would get hired, but the degree provides the foundation for a better-skilled employee. The complete qualification comes from the basis of a certain applicable degree along with certain experience. The council approved the new job descriptions making them clear as to when degrees are required. Often times I criticize the council for certain actions, but, I can and will support them when they are doing the right thing.

In conclusion, the council did well last night. Approving the letter of intent as a voting member of the agency was the right thing to do. Agreeing to start town halls was the right thing to do. We need leaders now. Not followers. The council should step up and lead.

I’m Tom Wiknich, and that’s what I think. I’d like to know what you think. If you have any comments about this editorial, or would like to discuss or recommend a topic, I’d like to hear from you. Please email them to info@kzgn.net.