10th KZGN News Talking Points Editorial

By: Tom Wiknich

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Today’s topic: Should the people take back ownership of the Desert Empire Fairgrounds?

I didn’t have time last editorial to include some Facebook and email comments to my last two editorials.

Concerning the editorial where I provided arguments against reducing council meetings from 2 per month to one per month, April provided a long comment but thought it might work. But she agreed with one of my comments by saying, “There should be clarification as to whether there would be a cut in the pay, due to cutting the meetings.” Larry added, “As a citizen, I want our council to meet twice monthly, for all the reasons Tom has mentioned.” Suzy mentioned, “I agree. I think they should continue with their twice monthly meetings.” Those are just the Facebook comments. I received many comments via email, and I even had people stop me while I was out shopping and say they saw the editorial and agreed with me. Two council meetings is the way it is now and should stay that way.

Now on to today’s topic: Should the people take back ownership of the desert empire fairgrounds?

First, I want to make it clear that I am offering no complaints towards the Desert Empire Fairgrounds (DEF) board. Everything I have heard is that they are in a difficult position and are trying to make the fairgrounds a viable asset to the community. I applaud their effort and stand ready to help them succeed. The topic that Tammy started is on the newly launched KZGN News Discussion group on Facebook.

Anyway, she started it as a concern on the desert empire fair grounds. Now I don’t know the exact story behind this, and I went out to the fairgrounds to talk to them, but they were closed for the holidays.

The Facebook discussion eventually led to a lot of great back and forth discussion between people.

Sharon added a lot of info for everyone to learn about the fairgrounds, how they started, etc. For those that don’t already know what is going on out there, the fairgrounds are owned by the state. A couple of years ago the state, as a budget savings method, cut funding of all state-owned fairgrounds. This meant that every fairground in California now would have to fund themselves. There would be no funds from the state anymore. I ask, why not just take ownership back from the state? After all, from the history I have learned is that many local people and businesses actually started and built the fairgrounds. When there was nothing there, local volunteers and donors built it with no help from the state. Along the way, for the fairgrounds to get certain funding, they transferred ownership to the state. I’m not sure of all the details of how that happened, but Sharon provided the data that the state is willing to sell it back to us for about $3.9 million. Well now, isn’t that just nice of them? We gave the state this great asset years ago, and over the years, volunteers and businesses have continued to donate thousands of dollars to support the fairgrounds, and now to get back to local control, the state wants $3.9 million. This is outrageous! I’m not saying that taking back local ownership is the right thing to do, but I think this idea should be further evaluated for the pros and cons. If the pros outweigh the cons, then we approach senator Fuller and Assemblywoman Grove to introduce legislation in Sacramento to give back to the Indian Wells Valley, a fairgrounds that many, many, locals and volunteers built and donated in the beginning.

Again, this is not a criticism of our local manager or board. Some of these people are friends of mine, and they are good people. It’s about a state that no longer wants to be in the fair business. It’s about a state that has turned its back on our fairgrounds. It’s about local control. This is the story as I understand it right now. But I encourage anyone that has more details, to please let me know them. I’ll happily correct anything I might be in error about.

In conclusion, tell me what you think! Should we do an evaluation of taking back local control of the fairgrounds from the state? I would love to hear from some of the DEF board members directly to get their thoughts on this idea. There is nothing that restricts them from joining in the discussion on the topic. Sharon recommended that we contact the CEO and a couple of board members to join us on the KZGN Ridgecrest Talk Program in the near future to talk and discuss the pros and cons of taking back the fairgrounds. Thanks for the suggestion, Sharon. I’ll work at getting that set up. How about it Fritz, would you help getting it on Ridgecrest Talk?

I encourage your email comments. Whether you agree with me or not, I’d like to read your comments. I may read some email comments on my next editorial. If you have a suggestion of an issue you’d like me to discuss, email that to me at info@kzgn.net.

At this time of the year, as president and CEO of Wiknich Broadcasting Corp and GUNS4US on behalf of my co-owner and wife, Shannon, the entire staff of KZGN TV, and GUNS4US crew, I want to wish all of you a happy new year! We all hope that your new year will be great and you prosper! KZGN TV will continue to evolve and improve over the next year. It would be a real help for us at KZGN TV if you tell your neighbors about us, especially the local news, weather, sports, and the Ridgecrest Talk Program!