Thursday, February 24, 2015
24th Edition of KZGN News Talking Points Editorial
By Tom Wiknich​.

Today’s topic will be: Should the county hold their public hearing for the county environmental impact report?

With  the county recommendations included in the environmental impact report to possible change zoning of over 130,000 acres of land in the valley, it would seem a suggestion provided at last Wednesday’s council meeting would be appropriate.
Robert Eierman suggested that since this is only an Indian Wells Valley issue, that the supervisors should hold the decision meeting, scheduled in late April, to be held here in Ridgecrest, instead of Bakersfield. The Kern County Planning Commission will be holding a meeting here in early April. That is great. Now the supervisors should do the same. It would be a great outreach by the county supervisors. Instead of making tens to even maybe a hundred people from the valley to travel to Bakersfield, it would be much fairer for the five supervisors and support staff to come here instead.
I spoke to our supervisor Mick Gleason, and he assured me that the idea is being pursued on his part. We appreciate his effort and will support him any way we can in bringing the meeting here. Having the planning commission hold their hearing here is good; however this does not replace the supervisors doing the same.
Now we move on to comments we have received on the new KZGN TV News Facebook Discussion Group concerning last Thursday’s editorial about the city paying for petroglyph art in the median of China Lake Blvd. I suggested that the expense estimated to be $90,000 be split 75/25 between the hotels and other businesses, which directly benefit the most from increased tourism and the city at 25%.
Erik wrote, “If you must, just put plain rocks in the median, make it look natural. Save the money and put it towards fixing the roads like gateway and bowman.”
Suzzy wrote, “The city needs the money for fixing more roads, that’s for sure.”
Skip wrote, “Tom, I don’t think Cal Trans would allow large rocks in the medians. They would be dangerous to cars. They art should be like the examples placed on Drummond. These are shear away mounts that will break off if hit by a car.”
And finally I got a long email from Mr. Spurgeon, the general manager from Spring Hill Suites and the advocate for the art. He said, “Almost all the hotels in Ridgecrest are owned by small companies or individuals. They are small businesses in every aspect of small business. Just because a few of the hotels carry multinational franchise flags like Marriott and Hilton, it does not mean these properties are owned by these companies. It means a small business owner is at the end of that line. Many of us in the hotel community have given a lot back, as do many of the business owners in this community. So suggesting these ‘big’ national companies pay the cost of this opportunity when the citizens of Ridgecrest and a broad array of other business would gain is a bit unfair.”
Well, to Skip, Suzzy, and Erik, I agree with you on your comments. To Mr. Spurgeon, I want to say thanks for the very lengthy email. I am not able to present the whole letter here due to time constraints. My only challenge to your claim of the Marriott and Hilton being a small business, I understand that you probably technically fit the description of a small business, but compared to my small business, I couldn’t even afford turning on the power to your huge buildings, let alone carry your expenses for even one day. In another section of your email you assert that the tot tax affects what you can charge for your daily room rate, in the tone that it is a detriment to your business. My challenge back to that is, it’s the same for all your competitors, too. Just as gas stations charge the same state and federal taxes, they all charge the same. So, if I buy one gallon of gas, then the amount of the tax does not stop me from buying the gas. Just as if all the hotels charge the same tot tax, it doesn’t stop someone that needs a room from renting a room. Another comparison, all the utilities charge state and federal taxes in our bills every month. If we decide to buy from that utility, we have to pay the tax. Also, my knowledge of franchise operations is that some of your franchise fees you pay to the corporation, is supposed to be available for you to get back for community promotion. Perhaps that is available. Again, thanks for the email. In the interest in fairness, so that no one can claim I’m getting the last word in because I have the editorial segment, I would invite you to join me in a Ridgecrest talk segment to discuss this further if you’d like. We’d have a half hour for you to provide your thoughts and position on this. Let me know if you’d like to join me for a segment. I look forward to hearing from you.
In conclusion, we call for the supervisors to hold their decision meeting scheduled for late April to be held here in Ridgecrest. The city council chambers would be an excellent location for the meeting to be held. We appreciate Mick Gleason’s effort to bring the meeting here and will support him any way we can. Having the planning commission hold their hearing here is good, but it does not replace the supervisors doing the same.
And that’s today editorial. Tell me what you think! Whether you agree with me or not, I’d like to read your comments. I encourage your email comments. Please email them to info@kzgn.net. This has been a KZGN Talking Points Editorial. Join me Thursday for my next editorial. I’m Tom Wiknich, and that’s what I think!