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139th KZGN News Talking Points Editorial

By Tom Wiknich

Today’s viewier-suggested topic: What were your thoughts on Wednesday night’s council town hall meeting?

I took so much time for the reporting of the casino story in this news segment, this will be a very short editorial. As a refresher, the meeting was the second meeting for the council to get the public’s comments concerning the building of a new Indian casino here in Ridgecrest.

I had two hopes for this meeting.

1.  I hoped they would do a better job presenting the project than they did last Wednesday.

2.  I hoped the council would actually have a discussion of the comments and questions brought up by people commenting.

It is very annoying when they just sit there and let people say things and offer no response or answers. For the first hope of a better presentation, I was satisfied. For the second hope of a discussion between the council and we the people, it didn’t happen. Again! They sat there and offered no indication of their thoughts or questions. There was absolutely no back and forth discussion with the people. At the end of the meeting, all they said is either they were tired and wanted to go home, or I have questions, but I’ll hold them for now and ask them later. Again, they sat there and listened, which is good, but they deferred all back and forth to the tribe chairman, developer, and some from the city economic development manager, Gary Parsons.

While the tribe, developer, and the staff answered questions, we got absolutely no indication from the council on their thoughts. The only real comments from a couple council members were to accusations that they had been negotiating this project in secrecy with no transparency and that they just dropped it on us and planned on reviewing it and approving it quickly. Their response was that while it may appear that way, it was not accurate. They admitted that they had been discussing for a couple months before going public. This was the normal operation for when a new project comes to the city and wants it to be quiet until it is ready to announce and provide sufficient details of the project. We did learn a lot more details of the project. We got to hear from the tribe chairman and the developer. Everyone had a chance to provide their comments. Now we wait until the council once again decides to bring it back to a regular council meeting. Maybe then we might finally hear their questions and comments. I hope we finally have a meaningful back and forth discussion between the council and we, the people. The project is clearly hard for the council to take up. That is evidenced by their silence during this comment period.

I know their response to this criticism and that they are waiting to hear all the people’s comments before they make their decision. I get that, but why not enter into the discussion with us now? Why just sit there? Why do you declare you’re burnt out and tired and want to go home because it’s late? If you aren’t capable of doing a marathon meeting, maybe you shouldn’t be on the council. There were probably still about 150 people still there at the end waiting to hear from you, the council. What did you do? You adjourned and went home. Why won’t you at least put your questions out there for us to hear? Will you ever have a back and forth discussion with we the people on this project, or will you do as you almost always do. Open public comment, sit there, offer no back and forth discussion, close public comment, bring it back to the council for finally their comments, and make a decision, therein no back and forth discussion under those rules.

In conclusion, eventually the council will have to tell us their thoughts. Until then, the community stays in a state of turmoil. Wondering what their elected representatives are thinking.

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.