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By Tom Wiknich

Casino opponents call for other new business to come in. I wonder what they are doing to help.

During the discussion of the proposed Indian casino, among many opponent comments against the casino, one that was mentioned more than once by the opponents was for the council to get other businesses to come here instead of the casino. While that idea has merit, I have to ask how they are willing to help make that happen.

As one who has been on the council, I know what attempts are being made to recruit new businesses to Ridgecrest. Gary Parsons, the city economic development director, works this full time. While he tries to look for base complimentary businesses to come here, these efforts are extremely tough. When any new business approaches the city to possibly locate here, he does a general evaluation of the project. If it fits into the city, he brings it forward. He does not have the power to stop any business that wants to come here. He has the responsibility to notify the council when any new business expresses interest in Ridgecrest. That is what he did with the Indian casino, and now we have a decision on that.

What about these people that keep calling for other businesses to come here? I ask them, have you stepped up and met with Gary Parsons and offered your help? Have you offered specific businesses that you may know that have interest in coming here? Don’t you think the city has been trying to do that for 30 years? I know in my time on the council, that was the council’s position. The truth is new companies are not beating on our door to locate here. There are various reasons, but one reason is they survey the town for things that would create a positive environment for them to locate here. One of those things they consider is entertainment for their employees. It’s not the only thing they consider, but it is one factor. Just as the base is concerned about new recruitment and detainment after they get here. Part of the equation is what is there for these mostly younger new employees to do here? The casino helps answer that question. Our movie theaters and local clubs help answer that question, as well as our local churches and schools help answer that question. Don’t forget, having a quality hospital and medical services available is important. All these things work together to make the city a better place. These opponents that keep saying we need other business here, I say to you: Stop yacking and step up and help.

If you care about this town the way you say you do, then get involved. It’s so easy to say: “get other business,” but then almost everyone walks away and does nothing to help.

You leave it up to someone else. For those who believe it’s best to shop out of town, instead of here, which are some of those people that say bring other business here, your dollars spent out of town are noted by potential new business. That is a consideration they evaluate in their decision to come here. Most of the time, new business needs certain population levels, before they even consider coming here. To reach those requirements, we need to increase our population. Every new business that adds new jobs does that. They add new employees, who will live here, buy things here, and join us in this fine town we have. They’ll buy or rent homes homes. The real estate market is a major driver of new jobs. It takes new people, willing to invest in this city to make it happen. While many of these “bring other business” people sit in their paid off homes, and only buy locally what they have to, and then hold the rest of their money for when they travel out of town, that hurts this town a lot.

In conclusion, I say to those that cry out for bringing in other business. Step up and offer help. Contact Gary Parsons and find out what he’s doing to try and make that happen. It’s so easy to throw ideas. How about helping?

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.