

CG BETTER & CG CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

David Snider

CANDIDATE FORUM – 10/13/16

1. Marketing Casa Grande.

I'm a strong supporter of expanding our efforts to market Casa Grande for economic development purposes. We do need to take charge of our message and messenger – and we need to be aggressive about getting our message out. Although I've heard parts of the proposal for this new organization, I'm not fully briefed on it: I have questions as to its mission, proposed audience, scope, proposed budget, etc. As to the question of funding, certainly the bed tax is an attractive vehicle since it (mostly) impacts non-residents staying in our hotels and motels.

However, our bed tax is already level with similar tax rates levied by neighboring cities so we don't want to "price" our local hospitality venues out of the market. At present, each 1% increment of our bed tax would generate roughly \$60-75,000 but I want to know more before I can make a sound decision on this funding mechanism. In the meantime, sharing the Casa Grande 'story' is a key component to bringing new industries and jobs to town – we have to be aggressive in these efforts.

2. Unaddressed City Needs.

The City's departments have all, by and large, engaged in some long-range, strategic planning that resulted in various documents that help guide their programs and services. But the City as an organization hasn't created a unifying planning document that enunciates the Council's vision and values and that ties the various departmental plans into a statement of who we are, what we hold as important values, and where we want to go as a community. I feel strongly that creating this statement will give us a significant tool in our push to develop and diversify our economy. It will be a document that can be given to industrial prospects, prospective funding sources, etc.

Of course there are other needs that Council should address. Needs such as developing a plan for mass transit that's feasible, fundable, and sustainable ... needs like a viable plan to address our homelessness issues ... a need to

enhance and expand the City's participation in events and programs that ensure that our veterans know that Casa Grande is a community that values their contributions and service. Obviously we cannot resolve all of these challenges overnight and some of them will cost money we don't have. But through careful use of funding options that are available and a prudent financial plan, we can move our vision for a better Casa Grande forward.

3. Quality of life vs public safety & taxes.

Casa Grande and the Council have been supportive of our public safety departments for as long as I can remember. At times the financial resources haven't been available to meet all the needs of those operations but by and large the Council has responded to meet those critical needs. The City's philosophy on quality of life projects has been to seek voter approvals and support for many of those projects. The City's responsibility for the public's safety, health and well-being is clearly recognized by Council and memorialized in the Charter.

At the same time, the City has also recognized that in order to remain a sustainable, viable community that's attractive to newcomers as a place to live, work, and raise a family, we need to construct and fund certain projects that residents want to use for recreation, cultural enlightenment, and enjoyment. Just as freedom is not free, government is not free either. I would certainly consider supporting an increase in taxes for these projects – but only after exploring all avenues of potential funding so that the best long-term options are used and not just an option that seems to be 'convenient.'

4. Top 2 Casa Grande issues.

The City is on sound financial footing and has seen a solid, consistent 4% annual growth in our local economy. However, there's no doubt that revamping and expanding our efforts to develop our economy by retaining our current industries while bringing in new industries and jobs is a top priority for the City. I have been involved in economic development as a staff person and as an elected official for some 35 years – I understand the process and how critical it is to be consistent, responsive, communicative,

and persuasive all the while asking the right questions. It is truly a team effort and I've been there and stand ready to do so again.

The other critical issue is transportation related. We are poised to jump to the next level as a City in the coming decade with several really major projects that promise to employ thousands of people. Transportation systems and infrastructure (roads, airport, etc.) will be vital to the movement of commerce and people to and around Casa Grande. This includes the addition of a third lane on I-10 between here and Phoenix and at least a plan for mass transit in town. In 2006 helped lead Pinal County's regional transportation initiative which now drives part of the I-11 vision and orchestrated the Pinal County Rail Accord with UPRR for Pinal County, Casa Grande, Eloy, and Maricopa. This is some of the expertise I will put to use for Casa Grande.

5. How to stimulate Economic Development.

In addition to a new, comprehensive marketing plan, we should consider imposing a one year moratorium on impact fees for industrial projects. We should also examine all policies and procedures connected to permitting for construction. I think a periodic evaluation of these critical processes will facilitate a "customer-friendly" atmosphere that encourages good construction projects. As we develop and implement our marketing plan, we should be "thinking like site selectors" and capitalize on our strengths, involve our existing industries for leads and evaluation of processes, seek out partners to maximize marketing impact and penetration – including our water provider to ensure we have an adequate and sustainable water supply for future growth and development.

Furthermore, as we develop our larger City vision, examination and inclusion of the City Airport as part of our economic development package is important. Please note: part of any successful community marketing plan must include "selling Casa Grande" to our residents. Folks living here and working here should be encourage to help sell Casa Grande. Positive attitudes about living here, working here, raising a family here when we interact with strangers in our stores, on social media, and elsewhere are powerful forces in a successful marketing campaign.