

Candidate Forum Questions

Bob Huddleston

1. Marketing Casa Grande is important to its Economic Development. There is a current effort in the community to establish a "Destination Marketing Organization". Its purpose would be to market and brand Casa Grande. Other communities have funded these efforts through a bed tax. Do you support such an effort? If you do support it, how would you propose the City fund and manage this effort?

I would support such an effort, but would have to look closely at the funding options. I believe we already have a bed board booth tax of sorts and would not want to duplicate any portion of that. The idea behind these types of taxes is to let tourism pay for it through increased fees. However, tourism is an industry in itself, and we need to be careful we are not taxing patrons out of the desire to visit our area. The City currently engages in Economic development on a limited basis, providing city staff and web resources for that purpose. The City also partners with the Chamber of Commerce, Central Arizona College, Central Arizona Regional Economic Development Foundation, and Arizona Work Force in this effort. The City has also established the Industrial Development Authority to work with proposed new projects in an effort to assist them with available funding for projects that ultimately benefit the citizens of Casa Grande.

2. Are there needs the City is not currently addressing? What are they and how will you work to implement and pay for them?

I believe there are areas we could improve on with many "likes" but not "needs" that face the community. The City has done a very good job in providing needed services to our citizens at a minimal cost. By far the primary services that the City has to provide to our citizens is through Public Works, and Public Safety. Services such as Sewer, Trash, Streets, Police and Fire, make up the majority of the City budget, number of employees, and receives the highest attention from City Council and City Management. This should not change and needs to remain our priority.

3. As a member of the City Council how will you balance quality of life projects with public safety needs? Would you be willing to raise property or sales taxes to meet the needs?

Quality of life projects tend to require additional revenue in the form of fees or taxes from the citizenry, especially in difficult economic times. We are fortunate that in Casa Grande we have some of the lowest property tax and sales tax in the region. There is room to give, in the form of additional or increased taxes, however, these options should be scrutinized closely and left entirely up to our citizens. My belief is that these projects need to go to the citizens in the form of a general obligation bond election or as a sales tax initiative. I would strongly oppose any effort of council to raise fees or taxes for any purpose that had not

been voted into place by our citizens. Public safety Must remain the priority, and we must ensure that our Police and Fire have the staff and equipment they need to properly protect our community. I do realize however that a Community has to have amenities to be healthy and happy, which in turn contributes to a safe environment for all. I believe my experience in law enforcement will assist me in striking that balance while prioritizing public safety.

4. What are the top two issues facing Casa Grande over the next five to ten years and how will you help in addressing them?

Managing and promoting growth has been and will remain the biggest challenge for the City for years to come. We have seen rapid growth in the past. We have seen not only the challenges that rapid growth can create, but just as important, we have seen the issues that can be created when that growth stops. I have worked through this on both ends. I have worked with developers in determining Public Safety needs of proposed housing developments and in commercial properties as well. I am familiar with this process and believe I can work through it again as a council member to ensure that the project pays for needed services, and is designed to efficiently receive City Services.

I also believe that Water will be an ever increasing challenge, not just for Casa Grande, but for the entire state. Water supply is a governing factor in whether a project can move forward or not. Our city council must stay engaged with the State and regional water authorities and begin to take positions on how our water is being used and distributed. This will present a steep learning curve for me, but I am anxious to participate and get involved in these processes.

5. How would you stimulate Economic Development in Casa Grande, e.g., incentives, a moratorium on impact fees etc.?

There are incentives available today for development to utilize on a variety of projects. Sales tax, property tax, and city fee rebates as well as off site infrastructure assistance are available and have been utilized. The proposed Destination Marketing Organization could assist in making these incentives better known and therefore closely considered by prospective investors. I believe that marketing our community more aggressively is a better option than a moratorium on impact fees. Impact fees were adopted by the City during times of rapid growth, and are a necessity for the City during such times in order to keep up with growth and delivering an acceptable level of service, without over burdening existing residents. They are not flexible, once implemented, and I would oppose an effort to abolish them.