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Big cities look to tap county water

Pete Byers

Guest Columnist

Rural Mohave County's economic growth and resources are being coveted by the big cities to the south. To achieve their ends and quench their thirst, metro-area carpetbaggers are working to stop all economic progress in our communities.

We have seen major developers progress through the county's planning and zoning processes. They are bringing tremendous amounts of upscale construction, parks, roads, sewers and other infrastructure, not just within their developments, but to the surrounding areas. This is being funded by millions of dollars being brought in from outside Mohave County – a virtual illustration of economic development.

And like the aforementioned carpetbaggers, Arizona Corporation Commission Commissioner Kris Mayes is practically legislating from her bench against one master-planned development in Mohave County. Mayes is fronting a strong attack against Rhodes Homes of Golden Valley. Now, regardless whether it is Jim Rhodes or anybody else, the issue is not the developer. The issue is that the ACC is starting to determine what gets built and what doesn't get built in Mohave County.

I would wonder if that same scrutiny is being used all over the state, and I doubt if it is because we have another large project in Mohave County that went through like greased lightning, and nothing was said. And now all of a sudden, they are pinpointing one deal – one development. Why?

We all need to look closely at what the ACC is attempting to do. The Commission seems to be utilizing new policies that increase the group's ability to go beyond regulating utilities, and so they think, allows them to regulate our economy. And it looks to me like they are trying to stop Mohave County's economy dead in its tracks.

This destructive behavior is a stretch of the ACC's job description. If a development has an Arizona Department of Water Resources allocation and has followed all of the rules and inspection necessities and pulled the proper permits, the ACC should not be confiscating any groundbreaking shovels. The ACC should be spending its time regulating the costs of utilities without trying to shut down all building, and in our case, our complete economy.

Of course, it is an election year. It's always warm and fuzzy for some politicos to go out and attack a large business under the guise that one is protecting society. But underneath the surface, I see some of the larger cities in the southern part of this state taking a long look at our water resources and thinking of ways to move water from up north down to their metro area – mostly in the Phoenix area. Perhaps they are seeing how Las Vegas is tapping into northern Nevada's water and hoping to do the same thing.

Every time I fly into Deer Valley or Glendale airport, I see huge developments of large homes with swimming pools growing farther and farther away from the center of the Phoenix metro area. Those developments don't seem to have anyone from the ACC throwing wrenches in their construction. In fact, I'm sure those developers would support anything the ACC did to stop Mohave County development while figuring ways to get our water down there.

We do have a large amount of water in our county, and we are finding more and more all the time. I'm not saying we have an unlimited supply, and I'm certainly not saying that we have enough for rooftops all the way to Vegas. But we certainly don't want to stop growing completely. And if the state messes around with the economy of a small community like ours, it can kill all of the jobs and all of the money that is spent here.

In fact, I have already been called by financial institutions wondering whether to loan any money here. They have heard advocates saying that we don't have any water. And when that word gets around, it isn't long before our economy could be ruined.

Now, I've been attending the SWAG (Statewide Water Advisory Group) meetings in Phoenix and there have been statements made there that some people think we should send rural water down to where all the people are – and that would be the Phoenix area. In other words, they want to open the floodgates and put a big, long straw into Mohave County and suck our water, and with it our economy, into the big city. I will do whatever it takes to keep that from happening.

We certainly do not want to be a donor county with our water like we have been with other things. I question the ACC's targeted roadblocks against this one developer.

I am very concerned about this. And I believe every construction worker, teacher, business owner and homeowner should also be concerned. We all have a stake in the improvement of our communities and we need to have jobs and a good economy.

Now, I have also been spending a lot of time working with some very concerned people from other parts of the state on various issues to benefit Mohave County. One of those issues is created by growth, but is also helped by growth. That is the need for improved transportation infrastructure. Growth causes the need to improve our state's corridors but also brings the financial ability to get the job done.

I am chairman of WACOG (Western Arizona Council of Government) and many of us from the various COGs attended the recent League of Cities and Towns meeting in Tucson. I attended the discussions along with the mayors of Tucson and Scottsdale and other city officials, and we discussed a variety of transportation and infrastructure problems which will soon be at a critical stage. I have to say that there are a lot of good people working very hard on finding ways to build and repair Arizona's infrastructure. And to solve those transportation infrastructure problems, we have to keep growing and keep our economy healthy.

I will continue to do my best to protect Mohave County residents' and business owners' property rights as well as our natural resources and environment. People who come here to invest in Mohave County with new jobs, infrastructure and improvements to our communities are appreciated. And those carpetbaggers who come here to throw wrenches into our economy's progress for ulterior reasons are not welcome.

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I read in the Miner recently about a development north of town and the rather shady allegations being put forth in a book written by Patti Lewis. I want you to know I had nothing to do with the beginning of that referenced situation, but I've had a lot to do with paying the bills.

There have been some millions of dollars spent on that particular subdivision and that lawsuit continues to grow. Whoever's fault it was in the beginning is not the issue. The issue is Mohave County is being blamed for a lot more than what has really happened. I think anyone who takes a look at the history of this development will find Mohave County has stepped up to the plate and tried to fix that subdivision, which was granted by a prior administration some years ago. We have done everything the court has asked us to do and every time we get it done, this lady sues again. And you as taxpayers of Mohave County are funding her litigation.

As for her book, if I want to read GOOD fiction, I'll read Hemingway.

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