Written by Gallupsun Staff
Friday, 13 May 2016 04:58

May 8, 2016

Someone this past week asked me if I planned to write anymore on the District 3 County Commissioner election. I told the person I had wanted to write a couple more letters – one on key priorities and one on that "pesky" alcohol problem.

Here are the 5 priorities I see for District #3 over the next 3 to 5 years:

#1 - Deal with the Alcohol and Drug problems that we experience in District #3. During the last mayoral election this was one of the main issues – mainly the alcoholics, homeless and mentally ill people frequenting the streets of Gallup. The Liquor Excise Tax doesn't provide enough funds for a "full service" program. Besides believe me no amount of counseling will work if the individual doesn't want to change. So, the solution has to be something else. I will talk more on that later. BUT, the larger and in my opinion more important concern is the drug problem – ask law enforcement folks and they will tell you this is the bigger problem. I commend the new Sheriff in attacking this problem and he needs more help.

#2 – Create Jobs through local business development and support. Notice I didn't use those words "economic development". That's because since the Casino opened in Churchrock and the national economy went south in 2008-2010, the biggest issue is our local businesses are really struggling and bringing in another "big box" or building roads and infrastructure for the Gamerco land group doesn't do one bit of good for our local businessmen. How can we support them?

#3 – Develop opportunities for creation of affordable housing coupled with desired community facilities. When I say “affordable housing” I am not referring to low income rental units. Gallup has a lack of high quality, safe [up to code] affordable homes for sale price ranges of $95,000 to $125,000 and $125,000 to $145,000. When you get lower the homes tend not to be quality and in “quote” undesirable neighborhoods. The “quote” desirable neighborhoods typically do not offer homes in this range. I think the next District #3 commissioner has to look at this along with the City. Promoting Homeownership needs to be a priority and focus on what it takes to change “quote” undesirable neighborhoods to “quote” desirable [i.e. Priority #1 above].

#4 – Plan for replacement of key high cost community facilities before they fall down. Two items the Detention facility and the Detox Center both need to be replaced. While neither is totally the County’s responsibility the County will be expected to be involved. Also, like it or not, the Hospital is just going to continue to be a financial drain – increasing taxes and forgiving rent owed doesn’t address the need to seriously restructure.

#5 – Realizing that District #3 is becoming a Native American District develop a vision to guide social-cultural change. Like it or not the time is coming so you need to plan for it.

In closing, just think about which candidate can best address these priorities?

Sincerely,

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