County to provide $30,000 to La Paz Economic Development Corporation

After some years of not providing funding, the La Paz County Board of Supervisors has announced they intend to provide $30,000 to the La Paz Economic Development Corporation in fiscal year 2018-19. The funds would come out of $105,000 the count has in its budget for “community partners.”

At a work session Aug. 15, the Board Chairman, District 2 Supervisor Duce Minor, said this is money being invested in the county.

“We get a direct benefit from the work they do,” Minor said.

Minor said the county’s sales tax revenue has increased from $185,000 per month to $214,000 per month, and that is mostly additional taxes from new construction and the work of the La Paz EDC.

District 1 Supervisor D.L. Wilson remarked, “I don’t know anyone else who has that kind of return.”

District 3 Supervisor HollyIrwin told La Paz EDC President Skip Becker, who was at the Aug. 15 work session, that she has not had a lot of communication with him. She said she’d like to see a quarterly report on what he’s been going in her district.

Becker replied by offering an overview of what’s been developed in the county. He stated a lot of things need to be kept confidential until the businesses involved are ready to announce them.
As for creating development, Becker said that, from 1988 until 2013, there was approximately $30 million in development activity in La Paz County, excluding housing and tribal activities. Since he was named to head the EDC, there has been $300 million in development.

Becker said one of the problems in District 3 is a lack of infrastructure. As an example, he later said there’s little electrical infrastructure on Interstate 10 between Quartzsite and Vicksburg Road. He said it’s also hard to draw people for a labor force.

Less than 5 percent of the land in La Paz County is taxable, Becker said, and much of the land does not have power or internet access.

Irwin said she appreciated the work Becker did. He replied he would make efforts to keep her more informed.

The biggest development project Becker and the La Paz EDC have brought to La Paz County is the Rose Acre Farms egg farm south of Bouse on State Route 72. They were also responsible for the Hampton Inn Hotel and O’Reilly’s Auto Parts in Parker. At the Aug. 15 meeting, Becker confirmed he’s been working with Kerr Mines to reopen the old Copperstone Gold Mine between Parker and Quartzsite.

Becker was named head of the La Paz EDC in 2013. In 2015, he was named Economic Developer of the Year Small Community by the Arizona Association for Economic Development. He was named to the AAED Board of Directors in 2016 and was reelected in 2018. He currently chairs the AAED’s Rural Committee.

In the discussion of funding other entities, Irwin said she would like to see funding for the Bouse and McMullen Valley Chambers of Commerce increased from $7,500 to $9,000. She said that, given their total budgets, that amount is not out of line. The
total budget for the Bouse Chamber is $14,700, while the McMullen Valley Chamber budgeted at $20,000.

The Board of Supervisors was set to approve funding for outside entities at their Aug 20 regular meeting.