



Friends of Carefree, are you ready for new Sand Sculptures? Visit the Amphitheater to see the new work from Ray Villafane.

There was a long Executive session following the regular monthly Council meeting on Tuesday evening. No topics or details are available.

Town Council Meeting, March 7, 2017 at 5:00PM – Councilman Krahe was absent. I have to state that the sound level of those speaking is once again *very* poor. I acknowledge that I have a hearing problem but even with new hearing aids, it has been very difficult to hear Council members *and especially members of the public who wish to speak*.

Items 1 - 7, Consent Agenda: These items were all related to routine town business (meeting minutes, bills, financial reports, event permits, etc.). Councilman Van Allen asked that #6 be held for discussion; all others were approved, 7 – 0. Item 6 had to do with a 5K Run & Walk scheduled for November 4th. Councilman Van Allen noted that there had been no mention of security (MCSO, Posse, or private) to assure the safety of the participants. After discussion, Councilman Van Allen made a motion to approve Item 6, contingent on obtaining assurance that security would be in place. Approved 7 – 0.

Item 8, Call to the Public: Mr. Jacobson addressed the Council on his prior issue relating to 6 trees in the medians along Cave Creek Road and Tom Darlington. He said he had not heard back from the town and wanted to know if something would be done to alleviate the situation which he perceived as dangerous. He did note that Councilman Van Allen had toured the areas in question with him. The mayor responded that one of the 6 trees would be removed but the others were not deemed to be a problem. Mr Jacobson asked if they would have another meeting (about signage) and the Mayor suggested they would schedule another meeting with Mr. Jacobson.

Item 9, Current Events: None noted.

Item 10, Presentation on CCUSD by Dr. Debbie Burdick: Dr. Burdick presented numerous slides and charts depicting the status of CCUSD. The School District's 'Mission' is to "Inspire Excellence". She went on to note that CCUSD was rated #1 in Maricopa County for student achievement. Student to administrative staff ratio is 62 – 1; costs per student are lower than many surrounding districts *[other districts have larger student populations and many more facilities]*. She added that language immersion has been a successful focus at all school levels within the district and mentioned that new programs for Drama, Dance, and Art are now being offered, and Tennis courts are now available for the first time. One chart in the presentation depicted the election results relating to CCUSD funding initiatives, with almost all having failed to win voter approval. When asked about the district's budget Dr. Burdick stated that the Operating budget is \$32M but does not include the capital projects, some of which she mentioned. *[Sorry, I did not hear all of the numbers and hence, cannot provide the total.]*

Item 11, Short/Long Range Financial Planning & Economic Development strategy: Mayor Peterson presented a much shortened version of the material that was covered during

the February 28th Workshop [*I won't repeat what I have already published after the 2/28 Workshop meeting, that info is available in the CFM Archives.*] Once again, the staff favorite 3 legged stool chart showing that Carefree does not have a local Property tax was prominent. [*It sure seems that individuals, who proclaim they are not proposing a Property Tax, mention the phrase Property Tax very frequently, as if hearing it more often will make it any more palatable to our residents. This resident finds it bordering on offensive. Paradise Valley, an upscale community most often compared with Carefree in these discussions, does not have a Property Tax, nor does Fountain Hills, where voters have rejected a Property Tax measure 3 times already.*]

The Mayor outlined a number of things that are in the works, before moving on to a new Marketing Strategy, which will focus on a 3-season approach with fewer but high quality events. [*In the current fiscal year the overall Marketing expenses are approximately \$525,000, a number which may be slightly lower in the upcoming budget for next fiscal year.*] There was essentially little to no discussion by the Council members. However several members of the public wished to speak on this topic.

Art Gimson, a former 1 term Council member, spent several minutes recounting his visions and/or predictions from his time on the Council. He broached the subject of how Carefree could reverse the continuing drain of Fire Protection from the General fund. That drain, \$300K - \$400k per year over the past five years, is caused by the shortfall in the 1% sales tax increase that was to pay for Fire Protection expenses. He then seemed to propose that the town could impose a special tax, or fee, on each residence and commercial property. His math suggested that such a program would more than cover the shortfall. [*The thing I find interesting is how appealing and easy it always is for others – politicians, bureaucrats, etc. - to propose the creation of an opening in somebody else's pocket to extract funds. Once the opening is created, it is even easier to enlarge. Of course, they always claim the approach will solve the problem – until the next time.*]

Joe DeVito, a resident recently appointed by the Council as an alternate member of the Planning & Zoning Commission, spoke about economic development, but sadly I could not hear most of what he was saying. I did note that he used the phrase 'think outside the box' a few times suggesting, to me at least, that what we have been doing so far does not seem to be working. I may be wrong, and if so, I apologize to Joe in advance. Perhaps the voice recording of the meeting will clarify his comments but given that the sound system from the podium was functioning so poorly, I don't hold out much hope.

Lyn Hitchon read a letter from Catharine Marr, owner of Venues Café. No copy of the letter was available to the public. In the letter, I believe Catharine expressed her feeling that the Town should do more to help local merchants. The tone seemed to suggest that the administration doesn't care enough about town center merchants.

The Mayor closed the discussion and announced that there were several things, some public some private, that the Council needed to discuss in Executive Session. With that motion approved, the meeting moved on to the next item.

Item 12, Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:10PM.

Respectfully submitted by John Traynor

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