

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS METRO PHOENIX

Scottsdale Team

Meeting Date: September 14, 2017 at 9:30 am at the home of Judy Levine

Members Present: **Judith Levine** (Host), **Pat Bauer**, **Gerry Corey**, **Ruth Jones**, **Dale Kalika**, **Diana Love**, **Paula McKey**, **Diana Nashban**, **Martha OConnor**, **Joanne Pamperin**, **Doris Perlmutter**, **Katie Wilke**, and **Mary Zongolowicz**.

Guest: Joan Lowell

Guest Speaker - Sam Campana, Executive Director of Desert Discovery Center Scottsdale

The following is a brief overview of the main points of Ms. Campana's presentation.

By way of background Ms. Campana mentioned her experience on the Scottsdale City Council from 1986 to 2000 and her leadership in the establishment of the Audubon Center, an 8,000- acre ranch and education center located on Central Avenue in Phoenix.

She listed some of the members of the Desert Discovery Center Scottsdale, Inc. Board of Directors including Chairwoman Christine Kocach (former Conservancy Board member), Dr. Art DeCaboote, Dick Bowers (former Scottsdale City Manager), and Joan Fudala (community historian). According to Ms. Campana, Desert Edge is built around "education" in order to be better stewards of the desert. She acknowledges the negative concerns from nearby communities. For example, In the Wingate community, DDCS, Inc has received approximately 200 "No" responses out of 600+ households.

DDC'S Thinc Designers, who built the 911 Memorial in NYC, also built the only permanent pavilion in Dubai for the Global Sustainability Conference. DDC, Inc. has raised \$500,000 plus \$100,000 in in-kind contributions, which includes payment for the exhibit design.

The architectural firm contracted for the DDC is Swaback Partners, who also designed the Discovery Center at Kartchner Caverns.

Referring to their mission statement, she emphasized the purpose is to "drive global visitors." The local tourism Industry has invested \$12 million for future support of DE. The final cost will be \$1.6 billion by the end of the project.

Currently, there are approximately 300,000 visitors annually, consisting of 55% local and 45% visitors. Currently 75% are from the areas north of Shea Boulevard, leaving 25% from surrounding areas. Currently, there are 600,000 annual visitors to the Sonoran Desert Museum in Tucson and approximately the same number attended the Chiluly exhibit at the Desert Botanical Garden.

According to Ms. Campana, all improvements were paid for by the second public vote. One half of the tourism bed tax of \$18 million will be used for advertising and the other half will be used for events, etc.

Dale inquired about sustainability and the impact on nature and animals in the preserve. Ms. Campana reported that the AZ Game and Fish provided a limited impact study which included the Lost Dog handicapped trail. In response to an inquiry regarding another location near Taliesin West, Ms Campana explained in some detail why that location was not feasible.

DDC anticipates that off-site parking will be required 15-30 days annually, at most, usually Saturdays in season. Since most hiking occurs mornings from 7-9 am, DE plans to open at 9am. The map shows the bus drop-off location. Originally 30 acres were available for the DDC, and now they are using only 5.34 acres. DE is relocated to an area between the handicapped trail and the parking lot. 30,000 sf of solar collectors will be etched into any overhead design over the walkways between the buildings. They also provide shade similar to a Palo Verde tree.

The Desert Edge will include the following areas of interest:

1. A gift shop, restrooms, information and history provided free in the commons area.
2. 3D maps showing seasons, weather and hidden desert including smells and sounds.
3. Meetings for a maximum of 300 people will be held in largest building, which is enclosed.
4. Experienced designers of buildings from ASU Global Drylands Institute
5. Desert lowlands
6. Mountains and Valleys
7. A steward making presentations
8. Geology
9. Saguaro forest
10. Desert Edge – History and how are we going to do better.
11. Current shed would be converted to a Volunteer Center.

The admission fee will be \$17.50 adults, \$11 seniors, children on busses are free (corporation funded). There will be a limit of 60 events, each sponsor providing their own liquor license, as required. They will be held inside the building and end no later than 9pm. The attendees will be shuttled in and workers will be out by 10pm.

The Global Drylands Institute at ASU is 3 months old today. ASU is the first university to offer a Sustainability Degree. Dr. Crow is passionate about sustainability and will provide \$30, 000 to teach teachers to educate the community. Traditionally, ASU buildings are built by the communities, then ASU provides the costs of the interior and maintenance.

The total capital cost is \$61.2 million all in 2020 dollars with 20% contingencies. The Capital Campaign is asking for another \$12 million from tourism for a total of \$24 million. There is \$10 million in capacity for interest and the remainder from Preserve tax. The annual operating cost will be \$6.3 million. Two-thirds to three-fourths of the recommended revenue is from earned income. There will be naming opportunities.

Q – Who has the final decision? The Preserve Director (Conservancy) or ASU, which could be influenced by the Koch Brothers, who are climate change deniers.

The Conservancy's position on DE is that they can work with the center, but prefers the DE be located outside the Preserve. Information regarding the latest report on DDC or DE can be found on the City of Scottsdale website. The library has hard copies of the DE report. She plans to meet with the Tourism council next Tuesday at 8am.

Members of the Scottsdale team held a meeting following the above presentation to discuss steps going forward. Members stated their desire for a Public Statement from LWVMP encouraging people to educate themselves about the proposed DE and including our position that the final decision be put to a public vote.

Four members, Judy, Paula, Corey and Katie, met the following Saturday, September 16, to compose a public statement. A draft of the statement is attached.

Next Meeting will be on Thursday, October 12 at 9:30 at the home of Judy Levine.

Minutes prepared by Katie Wilke October 10, 2017. (Revised Draft)

***Attachment:** Public Statement

ATTACHMENT

September 2017

Subject: Attention Scottsdale Taxpayers

Hi, please don't ignore...this affects you! The Scottsdale Team of the non-partisan League of Women Voters, as part of its educational mission, has been studying the proposed Desert Discovery Center (which is now renamed Desert EDGE) on the McDowell Sonoran Preserve for over a year. You will be paying for it somewhere down the line, so read on. The proposed Desert EDGE will be presented to the Scottsdale City Council at a meeting on September 26 and will be up for final decision sometime in late October. The League has taken a stand in favor of submitting this controversial project to you through a public vote rather than have the City Council make the decision. We are not taking a position on the building of Desert EDGE, but list the points at issue below. Please read them and think about this.

1. The value added by building Desert EDGE
2. The environmental impact on the Preserve of Desert EDGE
3. The degree to which local residents' taxes will or might be raised to fund ongoing operations
4. Impact on existing adjacent infrastructures

Additional information on the project is available on the Scottsdale city site (www.scottsdaleaz.gov), No DDC (www.Noddc.org) and Protect Our Preserve (www.protectourpreserve.org).

Please review this information and then contact Scottsdale City Council Members with your opinion at citycouncil@ScottsdaleAZ.gov.

For further information about the League of Women Voters of Metropolitan Phoenix, please visit the website www.LWVMetroPhoenix.org.