

A BETTER FUTURE FOR OUR FAMILIES AND OUR TOWN

See Dr Bill Ullery's *weekly column in the White Sheet*

This is a series of 7 articles. The emailed version was delivered Jul 29, 2012.



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ASU Havasu is open for business.

Now what?

By Dr Bill Ullery #1 in series of 7 articles

August 2012, the first students will cross the threshold of [ASU Colleges at Lake Havasu City](#). It's a big day for the students, for ASU, and for our town. By all measures, historical.

Bringing a major university to Lake Havasu City required the perseverance and foresight of a group of community [leaders](#) who saw the potential of a university as an economic growth opportunity for our town. But the job isn't finished.

At the outset, we knew our town had impressive assets to offer—starting with the lake. Add a nice resort community with a big spring break draw and 30 million people in Southern California within easy driving distance. As business portfolios go, what Havasu had to offer to any university—any business partner—was impressive!

Economic downturn gave us lemons. We made lemonade.

We once envisioned a brand new campus next to Contact Point on the lake. We helped the city acquire that BLM land valued at \$128 million, which was quite an accomplishment.

We knew campus construction costs could be \$50 million at that site, even in the best of times. In tough economic times, however, our university dream seemed distant. But when [LHUSD](#) enrollment dropped and the Daytona Middle School was [closed](#), we were given the opportunity to turn the abandoned Daytona site into a start-up ASU campus. An [agreement](#) with ASU coupled with a [\\$2 million](#) fundraising effort by [HFHE](#) gave Lake Havasu City a university campus. We got the job done without tax dollars.

One door closed, another opened. Fortunately, we had an organization and a plan in place to close the deal. And we had impressive grass-roots support of our town all of which impressed ASU.

What if we could build a campus to serve 6,000 students? What would the economic impact be? University is a business. ASU Havasu is an economic engine that will produce if it is fed.

The present Daytona facility will likely max out at 1,200 university students. Obviously, that's far short of enrollment goals and the potential economic impact we projected in our 2008 HFHE [business plan](#). Our business model predicted a 6,000 student campus as did Payson, could have a \$150 million per year economic impact on our city. (We did projections ranging from 500 to 20,000.)

We also liked what I saw in Flagstaff—with about 20,000 university students. It's a very nice university town about the same population as Havasu. Good economy, low crime, diverse.

However, we calculated our university partner would generate a profit on less than 1,000 students if 75% were non-residents. That's called a win—win. But it means that Lake Havasu citizens, business leaders, and our local government must be actively involved in growing the business. In short, involved as partners.

Do we have the leadership and resolve to effectively manage our impressive portfolio to achieve the \$150 million economic impact that is within our reach?

A few months ago the News Herald published an article headlined “**Bill Ullery is at it again.**” I'd like to say “I'm *Still* at it.” I believe in this town and its people and its future. In a series of articles over the next seven days, I will be sharing my ideas on what we can do and *need* to do to protect our assets and improve our local economy, starting with the university and our lake. Some ideas may surprise you. Some may shock you. All of them will get us talking. ***It's about our town's economy. And, our city government's role in protecting and improving our economy.***

With over 1,600 people in my email address book, I'm about to expand to over 4,000 by October. But, it can't happen unless I hear from readers, supporters, and friends.

So, I want to hear from you. Email me at dbu@dbuhomes.com or call me at; **928.716.3014** If you are reading this in print version, the active links can be found on the web version at www.BillUllery.com

What do we need to grow ASU Havasu to 6,000 students?

It takes a village—or a city

By Dr Bill Ullery #2 in series

Our ASU Havasu campus is a business—potentially, a BIG business. ASU Havasu is an economic engine that can bring jobs and dollars to the city. As with any business, it takes effort to make it succeed and grow. Sure, as a town, we could leave the campus to survive on its own—or perish.

Unlike community colleges, Arizona universities have no taxing power. But, community colleges can increase income by raising tuition and fees and modest tax increases. Similarly, the k-12 school districts can initiate local bond issues to meet expenses not covered by state funding. However, our universities must rely on the AZ legislature for a significant part of their revenue.

In the past three years, our state legislature has slashed over \$250 million from university funding. Arizona now spends more on incarceration than on higher education, and that won't change without huge societal changes. The picture is clear, Arizona universities cannot fund major land or building acquisitions with state appropriated dollars. Which means there will be no state funding for university expansion in Lake Havasu. Folks—it's up to us.

Little help from our 'friends'

We can expect little, if anything, from Mohave County, Kingman, or Bullhead City. The County has yet to contribute a dime to our ASU campus construction project. (I'll be commenting more on *that* situation in a future article.) Despite the fact that Kingman and Bullhead residents will benefit greatly from ASU Havasu access, we got little more than lip service from those communities. During HFHE's capital fundraising campaign, one guy down in Parker contributed more to the campus project than HFHE got from all of Kingman, service clubs included.

Yes, it still takes money to make money.

But, today, Arizona universities are [not alone](#) in turning to cities as partners when states refuse funding. Universities across the country are working with local governments to build and grow campus [facilities](#). That's the model used by Phoenix and ASU to build the ASU [Downtown](#) campus (which is also the model I used when I wrote the HFHE business plan for our university project). For Phoenix, economic stimulus was the goal.

The university partnership was the business model used by Sierra Vista to build UA South and for the proposed 290 acre ASU North Campus in [Payson](#). The Payson [plan](#) states that through “private-public arrangement between donors, private investors, the towns of Payson and Star Valley. . . private investors will provide the capital and expertise to design, finance, *build and manage the campus long term.*” Payson city government is actively promoting the campus project and working with nearby communities in Gila county.

We have work to do!

The conclusion is clear. Any major university campus development effort in our town must be financed by Lake Havasu City and its residents.

Tomorrow I'll offer my ideas on what we must do to take our new university campus to 6,000 students with the objective of a \$150 million positive economic impact on our town. That's \$150 million per year! And it's consistent with the business plan we formulated in 2008. *It's about our town's economy. And, our city government's role in protecting and improving our economy.*

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What do we need to grow ASU Havasu to 6,000 students?

A city charter

By Dr Bill Ullery #3 in series

Growing the ASU Havasu campus to 6,000 students is a job that is too big to leave to volunteer organizations. For example, without the \$1 million check from the Santiago family, HFHE would have had real difficulty in reaching its \$2 million goal for the current Daytona site.

We need an organization that can get the job done. The city is that organization and it must take on the major leadership role and workload to move us forward—toward a goal of 6,000 students for our university campus. In short, it's a job for the mayor and council with the full weight of local government behind the effort.

Moreover, to effectively grow the ASU Havasu business, raise the money, and manage our resources, *Lake Havasu City must change from a general law to a charter form of city government.* The other major university locations in this state, Tempe, Phoenix, Tucson, and Flagstaff are all [charter cities](#). But as a general law city, our local government can't directly spend a dime on education or a university campus. We intend to be a major university city and we must evolve to get there.

General law cities are permitted to exercise only those powers that the Arizona Constitution and statutes confer on them. It's a one-size-fits-all box for the management of local government whether it's a town of 5,000 or a city of 50,000 plus. Plainly stated, what worked for Lake Havasu 30 years ago is not relevant to our city today.

Magna Charter

Establishing a charter government is akin to writing a constitution. The citizens determine how local government will best serve them. A charter is by the people and for the people. As a charter city Lake Havasu would no longer have to depend on the state to take action to protect our assets or determine our economic future.

Charter cities also can set their own rules regarding vacancies on the city council. But, under general law government, Lake Havasu citizens are stuck with state rules. As a result, we have two new council members who were “elected” to their seats by five city council members.

In contrast, the [Phoenix city charter](#) requires a special election should a vacancy occur one year or more before the end of the mayor’s or a council member’s term. If we had that rule, Borrelli’s and Nyberg’s seats would have gone to general [election](#), and the [voters](#) would have decided who would represent them on the city council for the next two years.

Let me make this clear. This is not sour grapes or anything against the two young business professionals who got the seats. They are both bright, took the high road, and I’m impressed with their willingness to serve our community. This is about the process—the lack of democratic process.

Remember the appointment of a city council member for a full 4-year term after the death of [Marie Meahl](#)? It was one of the reasons cited for the 2005 recall of the mayor and three city council members. Havasu citizens were up in arms. *Again the problem wasn’t the person who was appointed. The problem was the process.* Voters felt disenfranchised. A city charter with term limits and a more appropriate system for filling vacancies could have prevented that contentious and expensive political recall. We can do better!

Charter city government can also set the rules regarding taxation. [Flagstaff’s city charter](#) gives voters the right to accept or reject a tax increase. I like that concept and the Singer Prop 200 language will be in my charter draft.

But, for me, the major limitation for a general law city is the lack of flexibility to support a university such as that evolving in our town: A project that could be the most significant economic development effort since the London Bridge. Presently, our city can’t spend a dime directly on our new university campus.

Get on the “Charter” bus.

Irritation over council vacancies is one thing. Impediments to improving and stabilizing our economy are another.

Havasu voters have twice defeated proposals to develop a charter for Lake Havasu City. However, times have changed and our town has changed. We need to change our restrictive general law form of government and develop a Lake Havasu City charter that meets our needs today and our aspirations for the future. We need to bring this issue to the table in candidate forums and city council meetings.

Let’s get this Charter bus moving! By the end of July, with your help, I’m willing to do the work and draft a city charter because, in the end, ***It’s about our town’s economy. And, our city government’s role in protecting and improving our economy.***

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What do we need to grow ASU Havasu to 6,000 students?

Broad-based support

By Dr Bill Ullery #4 in series

Growing ASU Havasu to a 6,000 student campus and realizing a \$150 million boost for our town cannot happen if we rely solely on a small number of private donors. The \$1 million contribution from the Santiago family was critical to closing the deal with ASU, but it will take many, many more million dollar donors to reach our university's full potential.

Based on my discussions with the best business and political leaders in our town, we need broad-based support to grow our university campus. Because, small donors with only one or two major donors will take us only so far. In a previous article, I laid out some of the advantages of a city charter form of government. One of those advantages is that the city can take meaningful and official action to financially support our campus.

It's about our town's economy. And, our city government's role in protecting and improving our economy.

To raise the money to grow and support our campus, during mayor Nexsen's initial administration, the city manager Richard Kaffenberger suggested a university tax district similar to that approved by the voters for [JTED](#) (Joint Technical Education District) and at the same tax rate. Yes, it's the JTED district that recently passed in the middle of the Great Recession! Like the JTED district, and the community college district, a university district doesn't have to end at the city limits. A university district could extend into the county areas such as those in our local public school district. Mayor Nexsen provided a bond expert for the initial meeting with ASU brass to explore that option. I simply incorporated the concept into the HFHE university campus business plan.

It was thought that if the voters were aware of the positive economic impact of our university project, they might support a JTED-type university district at about the same tax rate—less than \$10 per year for the average homeowner. That's about the cost of a bucket of fried chicken or a carton of Coke per year. And the return on that investment is potentially \$150 million per year—if we do this as a team, as a city.

Like the *Clean Water Committee* did when we undertook that huge sewer project, HFHE and other community organizations can and must play a key supporting role. But the heavy lifting must be done by those who will benefit from this economic investment—the citizens—business owners, homeowners, individuals and families—you and me.

What's the time-frame?

As a former college system CEO, I think it will take ASU about 3-5 years to get the new business up and running smoothly. But, I also feel urgency of timing because of the current higher education crisis in our prime recruiting ground in neighboring California.

Because of [repeated statewide funding cuts](#), "California students are increasingly being courted by out-of-state colleges seeking to take advantage of cutbacks and rising tuition at the Golden

State's public universities. The push comes at a time when the University of California and California State University systems are struggling with repeated state funding cuts -- \$1.6 billion over the past decade -- that have caused them to hike tuition, cap enrollment and slash programs.” They have a terrible mess over there. And, we have a new university campus here.

We also know from news reports and documents secured from the [Regents](#), that nonresident tuition at whatever rates the market will bear, is among the few available sources of new revenue to our university system.

Folks, this ain't rocket science!

My intent is to start now (and I have started now) with the planning of a city charter and a university tax district. Moreover, I think we should be ready to finance campus expansion within four to six years.

Getting to the level of economic impact we all desire suggests “we need to get with it.” Or, the low hanging fruit on that California tree will get picked by every other college and university in the country.

Miss the opportunity to achieve success with this terrific business model and the local critics will pour out of the woodwork to boil our city leaders in the proverbial pot of oil. (And by leaders I'm including government, businesses, and organizations.) And, I'll throw gas on the fire! We'd include the CAVE people (Citizens Against Virtually Everything). It could be ugly!

So, let's steer this ship in the right direction. Because we all want to see that \$150 million per year economic impact on our town...soon!

This space is available.

Yes—you can help. Attend candidate forums and ask questions. Make Havasu's economic vision an issue. Be assertive with your questions. Write letters to the editor. Better yet, write an article and publish it right here. In the end, ***It's about our town's economy. And, our city government's role in protecting and improving our economy.***

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A city charter 2-year terms & term limits

By Dr Bill Ullery #5 in series

Lake Havasu City had a rather nasty [recall election](#) of the mayor and three city council members back in 2005. The 2005 dust-up was particularly difficult for me as I had friends on both sides of the issue.

Many locals thought the contentious nature of the recall was bad for business and the economy of our town. Those responsible for new business recruitment reported negative consequences over a rather long term. Obviously, it takes time for wounds from such “family” conflicts to heal.

In contrast, recall elections of state legislators are rare. Last year’s recall of State Senator Russell Pierce was historic and was the first sitting senate president ever to be successfully recalled.

There is a simple, over-riding reason Lake Havasu City voters have too often resorted to recalling local officials. I think that reason is our one-size-fits-all form of local government. Unlike municipal charter government, the general law government doesn’t give voters the option to set term limits and dictate how seats are to be filled.

Dillon’s Rule: A Short History

The Arizona Constitution in 1912 established the relationship between the state and cities. Arizona’s early legislators used a concept known as *Dillon’s Rule*. The concept is named after a 1903 US Supreme Court decision that upheld 1868 rulings by Judge John F. Dillon. Dillon’s rule determined that cities are creations of the state. Therefore, the state legislature controls local government structure. Also called *general law government*, in Arizona, it determines how Lake Havasu City finances its activities, what the city can and can’t do, and how we do it.

Hometown Rules: Charter City Government

General law government dictates four-year terms for local officials and no term limits. On the other hand, our state legislators serve two years with a four consecutive term limit (with no apparent impact on the number of candidates competing for the seats). Under *city charters* [Prescott](#) and [Casa Grande](#), for example, voters set two-year terms for some city officials. Thus, every two years, voters have the chance to vent their frustrations and “throw out the bums” in a regular election process. Under a city charter, I think we could set two-year terms for Havasu’s mayor and council members and save our town a lot of aggravation and money in recall elections.

Love ‘em or Leave ‘em

Biennial elections could mean we get to know our elected officials a bit better through the election process. It could stimulate some new thinking on what’s best for our town and the direction we need to go. It’s sort of like renewing wedding vows, which sure beats messy divorce.

A city charter could set [term limits](#), as well. The concept of term limits or rotation in office is not a new idea. It dates back to the democracies and republics of antiquity, according to Wikipedia. The objective is to ensure that authority is circulated frequently and to put a damper on corruption. Moreover, if voters are paying attention, they can get more experienced people into city leadership.

I for one would vote to allow a maximum of four two-year terms for a total of eight years for our mayor and council, just like our state legislators. If incumbents are doing a good job and can demonstrate that in the election process each two years, then they get to stay (for the eight years). If not, then the voters can tell them ‘so long.’

A city charter would also allow voters to determine the process for filling council vacancies. Consider the recent city council resignations and the huge uproar over the replacement process. One news headline read, “[Two resignations, two vacancies, zero public say.](#)” An editorial decried, “[Nyberg, Borrelli shut out city voters.](#)”

Surely, there’s a better, more democratic way to fill city government vacancies. For example, the Phoenix city charter requires general elections to fill any vacated council or mayoral seat that has more than a year left on the term. For Havasu, that would be a big improvement.

Like you, I want a solid and prosperous future for our families and our town. A city charter with all the self-determination that it offers us might just help us achieve a bit more stability and harmony in our local political scene so we can put our energy toward what really matters. In the end, *It’s about our town’s economy. And, our city government’s role in protecting and improving our economy.*

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What is local government’s role in protecting Lake Havasu City’s greatest asset--ourLake?

By Dr Bill Ullery #6 in series

Anything that impacts the lake impacts our economy

Remember the news headlines back in August 1994? *Pollution is ruining Lake Havasu tourism.* The Tucson Citizen was just one of many newspapers to jump on the gloom and doom train: *From water-skiing college kids to retirees in motor homes and houseboats, tourists flock to this desert oasis, lured by its sparkling lake and the incongruous sight of the London Bridge in the middle of the Arizona desert. But there is trouble in this Colorado River city. A water-pollution scare has cut deeply into the tourism business. The beaches and shops are all but deserted and there is only a fraction of the normal boat traffic on the lake.*

Seems like every news rag in Arizona and California carried that story. The point is anything negative like the pollution event on Lake Havasu is news and is likely to be widely publicized because our lake is a very big deal in this region. Anything that adversely impacts the lake adversely impacts our economy.

Lake-less Havasu City by any other name

Joking around with Jim Salscheider, the Marine Association CEO, I suggested that without the lake, we would be just a downstream version of Bullhead City but with only one smoky Indian casino across the river. Our town would look like Quartzite with rusty trailer parks and dusty rock shops everywhere. We likely would have called it "Bullshite."

We'd have about 50,000 snowbirds dry camping in the washes in the winter and perhaps 500 people left in the summer—all fighting like cats and dogs over the most petty political crap. And Jim agreed most of us would be someplace else. Can you imagine ASU setting up business in a town like ...? We can agree, without the lake and that lake in good condition, we are—well, Bullshite, at best.

As the Lake goes, so goes the City

Keeping our lake in good condition is essential. Unfortunately, the increased use of area beaches made more accessible by ATVs and off-road vehicles along with boats and jet skis, is creating quite a trash problem. Not to mention pollution due to the lack of toilets in heavily used areas.

I see local residents and recreational visitors alike who are increasingly treating our lake and beaches like parks at a time when there are no park services in vast areas of the lake shore within and near our city. If not addressed quickly and decisively, our new problems will become major regional news. Not the kind of news that helps our reputation or our economy.

Who's in charge here?

We have over 100 miles of shoreline on the Arizona side. About 14 miles of shoreline with the island are within our city limits. The remainder is in Mohave County with the exception of the La Paz County portion from the Bill Williams area south to the dam.

Amazingly, there are over 17 local, county, state, and federal agencies that claim jurisdiction over various aspects of our lake. And *no overall coordinating governmental unit*. Clearly, without effective leadership and management, our lake and our city are terribly vulnerable to problems and crises.

Because of the scary economic implications of doing little or nothing, I think it's time to create a major city **Lake-Parks District** to manage every beach within city limits and to address any and every lake issue that impacts our economy. I emphasize *any and every*...

Just do it

Let's look at some very specific examples of lake-related initiatives that could help our town and our economy. Check out the Convention Visitors Bureau's new strategic plan for Lake Havasu City. This plan was endorsed by virtually every business group in our town.

- ✓ We could benefit greatly with new and better maintained beaches. (Windsor State Park figured out how to get such improvements done and approved. What about our city?)
- ✓ We could benefit from overnight mooring and make money doing it.
- ✓ We could benefit by improved and expanded boat-launch ramps and lake access. One idea is to develop and expand Site 6. (And, we could benefit by the development of Contact Point State Park as a full-service marina consistent with the plan presented to the legislature in 2006.)

The new city **Lakes-Parks District** can address these needs and work with those 17 agencies to protect and manage our most valuable asset. To make it work, there must be multiple new sources of revenues to finance such a district. The Marine Association has some great ideas in that regard. The Chicago parks district has a fine model of [shoreline development](#).

Lake Havasu City government can take the initiative and exercise leadership. Those 17 agencies with lake jurisdiction need leadership and coordination. My take on this is that we'll get no help from the feds and the county on that score. So, just do it!

We need to know where our candidates for city offices stand on taking a leadership role to protect and manage our lake as an economic resource. We need to know where they stand on structural changes in government to get the job done.

Given the solid support by the business community and its organizations, where is the city's plan? Where is the leadership? Where is the vision?

It's about economic development for Lake Havasu and decent jobs for our citizens. Is there any issue before us more important? In the end, ***It's about our town's economy. And, our city government's role in protecting and improving our economy.***

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Mohave County has *other* priorities

Who will protect our Lake?

By Dr Bill Ullery #7 in series

In a previous article I suggested that without our Lake, Lake Havasu City would be just a small, dusty, downstream town called "Bullshite," and everything that name implies. The point is that our lake is a **big deal**. Our Lake is the very backbone of our local economy. Our Lake is our greatest and most vulnerable asset.

Clearly, our Lake and, consequently, our economy are vulnerable to natural and man-made events that negatively affect the quality of the lake. But we are also vulnerable to

mismanagement and the lack of effective leadership to protect our valuable resource. We cannot count on the other agencies, including Mohave County government, to have our best interests in mind when it comes to our most fundamental economic protection needs.

County Carpet-bagging. Nothing has changed

For me, the County is always a local issue when it comes to a fair return of the tax dollars we send to Kingman. We all know that Havasu contributes a disproportionate share of the county's revenues without a fair return.

Some folks will remember the efforts of people like me to secede from the county in an effort to recoup millions in taxes paid to Mohave County. I actually hired a lobbyist to take our case to the state senate. And, I considered investing \$300,000 in a state-wide [referendum](#) to create a new Lake Havasu County. But, my wife caught wind of the \$300,000 deal and threatened to "secede" me directly into the guest bedroom, which killed that little project. I still think the voters of this state would pass a secession plan handily just to spite the governor and legislators. Even the city council in 1999 explored the concept of secession. If I find the cash, this project is back on my front-burner.

I filed several lawsuits against the county for various issues I thought were not in our town's best interests. We did succeed in putting a stop to frequent violations of the open meeting law.

We also advocated at moving the county seat to somewhere...anywhere, other than downtown Kingman. For good reason. Go to [R/UDAT](#) and you'll find the report on Kingman. This study, done with local Kingman business interests, advocated the centralization of county government in downtown Kingman as a strategy to rejuvenate their central business district. How on earth does spending Havasu taxpayer dollars to rebuild downtown Kingman benefit Havasu?

So, Kingman's downtown got a multi-million dollar new county administration building. A new 242,000 square foot county jail built at the cost of over \$72 million dollars, a juvenile facility, and a new justice court.

But, what about returning some of our tax dollars to a project in our town? Our "friendly" county with an operating budget based on a general fund balance of about \$83.9 million in the last fiscal year, couldn't find a plugged nickel to help with Havasu's new ASU campus project: A project that's the most significant economic development effort for Havasu since the London Bridge.

What do we get?

Based on the county's history of "grab and run" with our tax dollars, we can't expect any funding support for lake improvements that would benefit Lake Havasu City taxpayers.

My auditors and investigators peg Mohave County 2010 tax revenues for Havasu's lake and city travel-generated activity at \$1,054,000. That included revenues generated from county lodging and sales taxes as well as the county share from state lodging and sales taxes in our immediate area. Those are tourist dollars and what is the biggest tourist attraction in Mohave County? It's not the railroad museum in Kingman or the burros in Oatman. It's the **LAKE**.

While there are some technical difficulties in tracking *exactly* how much the county takes in from Lake Havasu tourism, we are certain of one thing—Mohave County gets its fair share of Lake Havasu visitor-generated tax revenues. What did we get? How about two boats (paid for by grants) and a couple of deputies on busy boating weekends. That's about it!

What do we need?

How about some county funds for enhanced boat access, launches, and beach improvements in the county areas? Why not a few revenue producing boat mooring and boat trailer parking areas? Why not increased police and security services? For certain, a priority on trash removal, toilets, and pollution control in the expansive county areas of the lake. All of these initiatives would have a positive impact on Havasu's economy. In short, we'd like a fair return of our county tax dollars.

How do we get what we need?

Over 17 local, county, state, and federal agencies claim jurisdiction over various aspects of our lake. We must work harder and smarter with those agencies, including Mohave County, and must take the leadership position in lake management. The best way to do this is to create a major city **Lake-Parks District** to manage every beach within city limits, and beyond city limits if it impacts our economy.

The **Lakes and Parks District** can address any and every lake issue that's within our town's interest. Emphasis on *any and every* issue. Just do it!

With the historic change to a 5-member county board of supervisors in the upcoming November election, perhaps we might find some candidates with plans to improve county services to Lake Havasu City. Now is the time to find out where candidates for county supervisor and city council stand on supporting and protecting economic assets that affect Lake Havasu City—specifically our Lake and our university project.

For me, it's about stability in our local economy and ensuring a better future for our families and our town. In the end, ***It's about our town's economy. And, our city government's role in protecting and improving our economy.***

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