

Desert Discovery Center is the poster child for the worst aspects of government

By Bob Littlefield, August 29, 2016

Recently one of the establishment blogs expressed surprise the Desert Discovery Center (DDC) had become the most prominent issue in the Scottsdale election campaign. They shouldn't be surprised, because the reason the DDC is such a big issue is simple: ***it is the poster child for what is wrong in Scottsdale city government under the administration of my opponent, incumbent Mayor Lane.***



In one scenario for the Desert Discovery Center, visitors would walk into the fanged mouth, read up on the reptile's digestive system, and end in a translucent chamber that makes up the rattle.

The most egregious outrage about the DDC is it violates everything the public was promised when we voted to tax ourselves almost \$1 billion to acquire the land for the McDowell Sonoran Preserve. We were promised it would be a Preserve, not (as my opponent recently called it) a "park," and as a preserve it would be kept free of commercial development.

Now, my opponent and his allies want to break that promise and put a "Desert Disneyland" right smack in the gateway to our Preserve. If this is allowed it will break faith with the voters of Scottsdale by opening the entire Preserve to commercial development. ***If the City Council can break the solemn promises made to the voters about the Preserve, then there is no commitment made by Scottsdale city government that residents can count on, wherever they live in our beautiful city.***

The second thing that makes the DDC such a big issue is it affects residents in all parts of our city. ***Lane and his allies want will have to increase the taxes of every Scottsdale resident, in every part of our city, to build and operate this white elephant.*** Even if you never visit the Preserve, even if you live in the farthest corner of our city away from the Preserve, your tax dollars paid for the Preserve and you will be forced to pay the costs of the DDC if it is built.

This leads to the third reason the DDC such a big issue - money. The last estimate for building this monstrosity is \$100 million. There is no private funding for this project, so all of that cost would have to be paid by Scottsdale taxpayers. Not to mention the estimated \$3 million annual operating deficit, which would also have to be paid out of city tax dollars. When our city has so many critical infrastructure needs unmet, the DDC, even if it were a good idea (it's not) would be an extravagance Scottsdale taxpayers cannot afford and do not want to pay for.

The fourth reason the DDC such a big issue is the secrecy and back-room dealings by which the proponents of this project (including Lane) have tried to sneak this project by the residents of Scottsdale. Like so many outrages put forth by Lane and his allies they hope to pass this project before the public finds out what a bad deal it is. ***Unfortunately for them the public is on to them about this debacle and opposition to the DDC is mounting.***

This leads to the biggest reason the DDC such a big issue in this campaign and why it is the poster child for what is wrong in Scottsdale city government during Lane's tenure as Mayor: ***the utter disdain of the proponents of this project for the near-unanimous resident opposition to it.*** There have been few public meetings on this project because the proponents hope to hide the details of it from Scottsdale residents. But I attended the few they held and I can tell you the only people who support this white elephant are the special interests who will profit from it. Scottsdale residents and taxpayers have made it clear they don't want this commercial development in our Preserve and they clearly don't want their tax dollars spent to build and operate it. But Lane and his allies keep looking for ways to get around the will of the public.

The DDC also highlights the enormous difference between Lane and I. My goal, which I fought for during my 12 years on the City Council and which I will continue to fight for if I am elected Mayor, is to keep Scottsdale the best city in America in which to live. My opponent, in contrast, sees our city's special character and high quality of life as commodities to be sold to the highest bidder. You can see this is true by reading his campaign finance report, which lists the special interests which have contributed over ***\$200,000*** to his re-election campaign. ***Voters have every right to ask Lane what these contributors are getting in return for this record amount of money.***

Bottom line, the DDC is such a big issue because it exemplifies everything wrong with the way Scottsdale city government under Lane does business – secrecy and backroom deals, giving taxpayer subsidies to favored special interests, utter disdain for the desires of Scottsdale residents and breaking promises made to Scottsdale voters. ***There have been many other outrages in Lane's seven years in office but this one really shines the light on the mess at City Hall.***

We need to take our city government back from those who are exploiting our city's high quality of life for their own profit, at the expense of Scottsdale residents. That is why I am asking for your support for my campaign for Mayor.

Bob Littlefield is a former three-term Scottsdale City Councilman and is running for Mayor. He can be reached by email at bob@boblittlefield.com, and his web site is www.boblittlefield.com.