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Ways to deal with land issues discussed

By *JIM SECKLER/The Daily News*

KINGMAN - Dealing with Mohave County's land issues was discussed Wednesday during a presentation of the Arizona Town Hall.

The Arizona Town Hall met at the Grand Canyon for three days in October to discuss land use. Town Hall President Tara Jackson spoke of recommendations brought up at that meeting before several dozen county and city officials at the board of supervisors auditorium.

One impact on land use is that Arizona's population is expected to more than double in the next half century. Recommendations that were brought up include state trust land reform such as federal and state land exchanges, Jackson said.

Other issues include smart growth, public and private partnerships to promote smart growth, regulating lot splits, increasing collaboration among city, county and tribal governments, balancing urban growth with protecting natural resources and planning for future growth.

Dist. 2 Sup. Tom Sockwell, who attended October's town hall meeting, spoke of unregulated lot splits where large parcels are subdivided into smaller lots without adequate infrastructure such as water, roads and fire protection. He also sought to protect agriculture lands from development, lands that grow much of the country's food.

"I don't want to see the United States have to import food like we do oil," Sockwell said. "Food that could be very expensive."

The Bullhead City supervisor also spoke of the need to build roads and how to find ways to pay for new roads.

County Manager Ron Walker spoke of Sockwell's recent request to form a committee to review the county's subdivision regulations that were adopted in 2001. Walker also asked members of the audience what the major land issues the county and local cities faced.

In fielding a question about the impact of the Hoover Dam bypass bridge, Walker said the county would force developers of large planned communities to pay for their own infrastructure, not burdening county taxpayers.

Other comments supported a video of former Arizona Gov. Bruce Babbitt who suggested that about half of the state trust lands in the state be preserved for the next 50 years. Which lands to develop and which to preserve are key questions to be debated.

The Arizona Town Hall, founded in 1961, has more than 1,500 members from all walks of life. It meets twice a year with upcoming meetings in April and October. The April meeting in Prescott will deal with paying quality teachers for students and the October meeting, again to be held at the Grand Canyon, will deal with affordable housing, Jackson said.



SUPERVISOR SPEAKER: Mohave County Dist. 2 Sup. Tom Sockwell, who attended a recent Arizona Town Hall, addresses the public Wednesday at the county administration building as Mohave County Manager Ron Walker and Town Hall President Tara Jackson look on. JIM SECKLER/The Daily News