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District 1 Commission candidates address CPA questions with agreement & stark contrast

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(Editor's Note: This is the first half of the story on responses by District 1 candidates to a CPA questionnaire as the story is split in two due to space concerns and the length of responses.)

Candidates for the District 1 seat on the Board of Lyon County Commissioners tend to agree on some issues involving public lands and wilderness, but draw stark contrasts on others.

Donna Kristaponis and Chuck Roberts, both Republicans, recently provided responses to 8 questions from the Citizens for Public Access, the public advocacy group formed this year in Lyon and Mineral counties to successfully battle lands bill and wilderness proposals and thereby keep the state's lands open for multiple use.

Candidates' responses

QUESTION 1: Given the fact that all lands bills (both enacted and withdrawn) have contained a transfer of public lands to the counties, can you visualize alternative means through which counties might achieve the same objectives. Are there public lands in Lyon County that you would like to see transferred from the Federal government to the county or put up for sale to the public? How important is it for Lyon County to obtain Federal lands? Please discuss your answer.

KRISTAPONIS: I can visualize many things, but then, reality steps in, and I recognize I'm up against Congress. Actually, Congress has already created alternative means to acquire public lands: the Recreation and Public Purposes Act. With the County growing very little at present, I see no real benefit in acquiring public lands at this time, but the planning should start soon if there's an interest. When the economy returns, there will be a need for land to provide for schools, parks, fire stations, open space, water treatment and sewer plants, and other public infrastructure. By planning now, we have a better chance for success than when the County is in a dramatic growth spiral and available resources are pulled in many directions.

ROBERTS: There are a variety of methods available for state, county and local jurisdictions to acquire public lands without the aid of a lands bill. Lyon County has used one such "alternative" method to successfully acquire land for public buildings and a rodeo ground in Dayton. Additionally, there has been a long-standing application for land in Mound House.

From my view as a Lyon County Planning Commissioner I do not see any immediate need for a transfer of such land. The pending update to the Lyon County Master Plan may identify public lands that may be suitable for future county use. However, that does not mean that the county or any other local jurisdiction does not have a legitimate need for acquired public land.

Generally, I do not support the division and sale of portions of public land from large contiguous tracts. However, I may support the sale -- by competitive process -- of public land that is embedded within the boundaries of previously zoned private land. An example of such embedded land exists along U.S. Hwy 50 near the Carson City and Lyon County line. The embedded public lands lie within industrial zoned private land and would likely have no other beneficial use. The embedded parcels are relatively small --

less than 40 acres -- and are on a lot of land that BLM would like to dispose of.

Depending upon the intended use, the importance/benefit could range from very beneficial at one end of the scale to a serious liability at the other. Remember, land ownership comes with the liability of maintenance. As such, if the county acquired an acres of public land for the purpose of building a library, that acquisition and subsequent improvements would be well within the county's financial means and therefore could be a very beneficial transaction. In addition to providing a much needed service, the county will have saved the initial land cost, which could amount to many thousands of dollars. Without the land cost savings, such a project may not be possible -- this transaction seems prudent.

At the other end of the scale if the county acquired a large tract of land for open space, the county would like not have enough monies available for the day-to-day maintenance and certainly not enough for fire suppression -- this transaction seems imprudent.

QUESTION 2: The Nevada Congressional delegation has often described lands bills as a "win-win" situation for all concerned, yet the majority of rural Nevadans appear to disput this. What is your view? Please explain.

KRISTAPONIS: The results can certainly be win-win, if the process is fair and balanced and diverse stakeholders work together. What we've seen to date, however, has not been an open process starting with what was a well-intentioned initial proposal from Commissioner Milz. He didn't mean to upset anyone, but the Commissioner was unaware of how different interests would feel about the process. Since he proposed no lands for wilderness, some in the environmental community were upset and wanted more balance in the proposal. Towards the end of the first process to obtain public lands, environmental groups requested approximately 80,000 acres of wilderness. Following the uproar in response to the request, the first process died, at least from the County's perspective. No attempt was made to negotiate by working together and discussing ideas, realities, or desired results.

The second request was made by the environmental community for approximately 700,000 acres in Lyon, Douglas and Mineral counties. This time the wilderness proponents did not invite other stakeholders to the table to discuss the needs, interests, and issues. Again, the proposal died because no open, fair or balanced process was established; in fact, there was no process, just one side making its position known. Politics is part of negotiation; to date no negotiation, no consensus building, and no process involving all stakeholders has been established or follows. As a result, we see lose-lose.

ROBERTS: Win-win scenarios employ the concept that there is enough for everyone, there are no losers, and all parties involved are considered equal. Win-win may be possible, but in this case, I believe the concept fell out of favor when it was discovered that not all interested parties and stakeholders were involved in the process. A win-win scenario can only result from an open and public process. I believe the Nevada Association of Counties Resolution 08-06 is the result of this disputed fact. I have read the NACO Resolution 08-06 and agree with its position and would continue to support the resolution as County Commissioner.

QUESTION 3: If the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) or the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) moved to close or restrict access to multi-use public lands in Lyon County that are under their administrative jurisdiction, would you as a commissioner oppose such an action? If you oppose the closure, to what degree would you be willing to use county resources to resist the agency?

KRISTAPONIS: If USFS or BLM worked in isolation to restrict access, yes, I would oppose such action. Because there are so many competing interests in government, an open process is extremely important. Acting without stakeholder involvement does not result in sound, fair public policy. I'd certainly weigh a specific proposal from USFS or BLM, but I doubt whether either group could establish good public policy without involving stakeholders and working towards consensus. Regarding county resources, the results in the county have been good with the use of limited county resources. I'd rely on letters, phone calls and the power of the press to resist unfair action.

ROBERTS: The Federal public lands within Nevada are most often used for agriculture, mining and recreation. I am a life-long resident of the area and use public lands in Nevada and elsewhere for recreational purposes. Additionally, I use raw materials from public lands in the furtherance of my

business and have been adversely affected by the unjustified closure of public land, especially if there was a history of long-term and consistent use by the public.

Any commitment of county resources or strategies would come from an authorized action and motion during a public hearing. The motion would require a finding of fact that such a closure was unjustified and a majority vote by the governing body. If, after a public hearing, such findings could be made, I would support action.
