LUCERNE VALLEY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

March 3, 2021

Meeting called to order 5PM.

**Minutes** approved.  Moved Debbie; Second Dave Rib; Approved

**Treasurer’s Report.** Dave Rib reported. November collection $192. Gave Moose $50 for meeting space. Mitsubishi Cement donated $6100 for digitization of LV Leader. Will cost $8600, and we will be able to send that amount to get it going. Balance $11,431.34.

**Congressman Jay Obernolte, by Shannon.** Obernolte sworn in Jan. 3. Co-authored HR127 which seeks an accounting of $1Trillion in unspent Covid relief funds. Also co-authored HR1133, the bipartisan Stopping Doctor Shortages act. This would close a hole in federal regs that prevents doctors in CA and TX for qualifying for student loan repayment programs, and could bring thousands of doctors back to our state over next decade. Committee assignments: Budget, Natural Resources, and Science, Space, and Technology. Calling for hearing on school reopening. Progress made in saving Barstow vets home.

**Assemblyman Thurston Smith**, by Dillon Wasowski, Chief of Staff. Working with Sen. Grove to get funds for SB County for law enforcement. Assigned to 8 committees. Budget committee the most important. A bill to be voted on to reopen schools by the end of the month.

**Sheriff John McMahon.** Introduced several who came with him. Updated the marijuana situation. Seems like 82 locations in LV, 800 in SB County, that need to be dealt with. Almost no consequence to the growers. Usually just a misdemeanor, and get cite-released. Best they can do is keep the pressure on them. SB County budget looking better for next fiscal year. Budgeting $1million in crime suppression for overtime to address this. Maybe they can figure out civil penalties since criminal prosecution doesn’t seem to be effective.

Lieutenant Bracco in charge of Narcotics reported. In a 4-month Operation Homegrown, 21 patrol deputies taken from patrol stations, assigned to marijuana enforcement in the desert. Also a fulltime team. Use grant funds from the State. Lucerne Valley had 140 search warrants. 90 arrests. 116,000# confiscated. $30 million of wholesale, plants and processing material. Focus on commercial grows and THC extraction labs since they can explode. Then they go to residential. Use drones to find underground grows. Discussion of leaving all the debris, including 8’ plywood fences. Cannot take property other than what is needed for evidence.

Discussion about levying $1000/plant fine, but judges are throwing out these fines. Sheriff can sue for the costs of the bust. Legal procedurism is preventing effective efforts against these people. Much said critical about the failure of Code Enforcement to do ANYthing that they could do. Suggest class action lawsuit against Code Enforcement. Maybe even the state for ‘negligence’.

Dawn Rowe addressed the idea of legalizing the crop, which would become eligible for grant funding to be able to deal with this better. Legalizing might provide revenue by taxing and regulating the operations. (Problem would remain if illegal was still a misdemeanor – not a felony. Why bother with permits, taxes, etc. competing with illegal grows getting a free ride?).

Is there any involvement with DEA? Yes, except they are limited by Prop 64 that legalized Marijuana in CA. So they stay out of it – except under certain circumstances.

**Dawn Rowe** – How to help. Need people to come address the Board of supervisors and advocate for the desert districts to bring the reality to other supervisors. Also needs us to send information to her office as we get it.

**Jim Harvey** talked about Prop 64 and the language in it that caused this problem. Passed in 2016. 80 pages. Legalized personal use and cultivation of marijuana. The intent of the prop was to take non-medical marijuana out of hands of illegal market. Was to regulate non-medical marijuana. What can be done to fix it? The state legislature can intervene on the basis that the purpose and intent have not been served. Must change the line on pg. 74 that changed it to misdemeanor. Must be changed back to felony.

MWA is involved in the water aspect of this issue. Not getting results so far. Our residents are complicit in allowing this, selling them water, allowing them use of the land, etc.

**Mike Mumford of CHP** reported on their contribution to enforcement. Impounded dozens of vehicles. Cannot hold vehicles hostage, so they are often right back out on the road. Look for the large water containers. Go for registration, license plates, unsafe vehicles, weight. Uphill battle. Will continue as they have been doing successfully, even though it doesn’t always stick. Knows BLM guys and park rangers are out there trying to help with the issue, also.

Much discussion about the whole issues, the difficulties enforcing the law in this lawless state, whether or not to legalize the crop to make it easier to regulate, how to tell marijuana from hemp, permits for which they use to hide behind. How Mojave Water Agency fits in as the growers steal water and drill illegal wells. Must be careful dealing with private property. No real solution evident.

**Peter Livingston for LVUSD** reported on “raising hell to get things done.” Every employee who wanted the vaccine has gotten it. Supported by Dawn Rowe. Enrollment at 875, higher by 5%, only school district in SBCounty that has grown in enrollment. Not being funded by State due to state rules that no longer funds districts with growing enrollment. Joined litigation to sue the state with winning lawyer Mark Rosenbaum. Covid stats will move us into the category that will allow the Middle/High School back in hybrid form. Maybe elementary can go to 4 days.

Will open the elementary school in April. Calif teachers Assn is preventing some schools from reopening, but we will open anyway. Sports are coming back. Using govt funds for facility improvements. The District’s Charter schools are serving over 9500 students in So Cal.

Meeting adjourned 6:26