Mojave Community Meeting

May 25, 2023, 12 Noon Mojave Veterans Building

President Ted Hodgkinson called the meeting to order. He noted that Mojave High School graduating seniors had received more than $20,000 in scholarships from local organizations. He reminded those attending in person or by zoom, that the Chamber is an all-volunteer organization and its activities, such as National Night Out, Trunk-or-Treat, the Thanksgiving Community Dinner, and annual Christmas Tree Lighting depend on local support, both financially and hands-on work at the events.

Heather Benes, secretary, reported that she had attended the recent EKEA meeting in Tehachapi and learned of a state-approved plan to close the courts in Mojave and Ridgecrest and consolidate the court business in Tehachapi. The plan is opposed by District 2 Supervisor, Zach Scrivner. Public meetings have not been scheduled yet. In other news, the Flight Test Museum in Rosamond is under construction and is launching a fundraising campaign to complete the hangar, which will display some of the aircraft that were flight tested at EAFB. Heather also thanked volunteers, Debbie Crocoll, Travis Behrens, and Brian Lazenby for their assistance in placing banners honoring MHS graduating seniors on K Street in downtown Mojave.

Ted Hodgkinson introduced the guest speaker, Jason Rodden, the Health Safety and Environmental Manager for Golden Queen Mining Co. Currently, the mine operation employs about 230-240 people and 100 contractors. The original mine dates back to the 1890’s. Golden Queen also employs an historian to catalog and preserve artifacts from previous mining operations. The company intends to donate those artifacts to museum in Kern County at a later date. The operation is focused on extracting precious metals, mainly gold and silver, which is recovered at a ratio of 10 parts silver to 1 part gold. There is also a process to recycle the “waste” product to discover and reclaim other valuable, heavy metals. Jason mentioned that mercury is one of those metals. In addition to metals, Golden Queen has an aggregate permit, which allows the mining company to sell the waste rock as aggregate, some of which lines the shoulder of the newly-rebuilt Highway 14. In response to questions from the audience, Jason said that the Mojave mine is an ‘above ground” operation and strictly regulated by the state of California. The permit process took 13 years, from 1997 to 2010. End-of-life for the mine is 2029, although it could be extended if sufficient metal recovery warrants. A reclamation plan is required which mandates the return of the mined area to its natural state and vegetation. He said that tours to the mine can be arranged. He also reiterated the company’s commitment to community involvement through grants to community organizations and paid internships for MUSD students and families.

Jeanette Pauer, President of the Greater Tehachapi Chamber of Commerce, announced plans for a workshop in Tehachapi for East Kern Chambers of Commerce. It is scheduled for early October.

The next community meeting is scheduled for Thursday, 22 June 2023 and will feature a guest speaker from Terra-Gen Operating Co.