DESERT DISPATCH

By Tamara Alaniz

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Valley Voices: Is Apple Valley the next Greece?

Government debt is skyrocketing worldwide, and we need only look toward any newspaper, broadcast or blog to find Greece lingering. As this newspaper's editorial of July 21 ("Greece offers sobering reminder") clearly states, America "is on an unsustainable and dangerous fiscal path" with its multi-trillion dollar debt.

The State of California continues to languish in multi-billion dollar debt with only mild improvement over the last three years. Of course, neither of these governments are at Greece-level debt ratios — that would not be fiscally acceptable to taxpayers or legislators.

Which brings us to the local level and why I am tired of hearing Apple Valley leadership say that we can afford hundreds of millions in debt to take control of the Apple Valley Ranchos Water Company and provide the same service at a higher cost. That's the truth — a higher cost — and to the tune of 30 years of burdensome debt.

Greece is scrapping to maintain stability with a debt to GDP ratio of over 177 percent, despite what austerity measures have been taken. It is both outrageous and heart-breaking when you see such a beautiful, culturally rich and historical place going down the drain from indebtedness.

So, how on Earth are we supposed to manage in Apple Valley when the Council is proposing over 200 percent of debt to revenue (our GDP) ratio? The Council budgeted $91 million in revenue this Fiscal Year with over $100 million in spending. At our current debt level of $56 million, even the Town's most conservative estimate of the cost of the eminent domain process, will send our town into a debt ratio that is higher than Greece's!

This is a scary proposition, and all because the Council "wants" the company. No statements have shown there is a need for taking this company. The Town admits that they can't lower water rates, but insists that they can stabilize rates. Unfortunately, that has never happened and it won't happen here.

Rate stabilization is a myth perpetuated by government to fool people into giving elected officials more power. If there was an example where rate stabilization actually occurred, you can be assured that it would be on one of the many bus shelter ads across Apple Valley.

We live in Apple Valley because of its natural beauty and rare opportunity to freely live in both an urban and rural community. We get the best of both worlds here; and, I do not want to see our better way of life become a fiscal crisis when we can stop it from happening by ending this unnecessary power grab and uniting our community once again.

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