

A proposed Indian casino, the Phoenix Coyotes and the budget dominated discussion at a community meeting Wednesday with Mayor Elaine Scruggs.

About 30 residents attended the mayor's Community Conversations, which Scruggs hosts twice in the spring and twice in the fall. More than 600 residents have attended the meetings since Scruggs began holding them four years ago, according to city

spokesman Jerry McCoy.

Scruggs lambasted the Tohono O'odham Nation's bid to claim land it purchased near the city's sport and entertainment district as a reservation. The tribe wants to build a casino and resort on the reservation but would need federal approval to do so. The U.S. Department of Interior already has approved putting 54 of the 134 tribal acres into trust, a move the city is challenging.

"It's a sovereign nation within our municipal boundary," Scruggs said. "They do not follow any laws of the state or city. They don't contribute any revenue or collect any sales tax."

Tribal leaders have said that they donate a portion of earnings to municipalities and non-profits, as required by the state compact with gaming tribes.

Scruggs asked what the city should do. Residents overwhelming responded with, "Keep them out," and "Fight them."

"Whatever you've got to spend to fight it, I favor the city doing that," said resident Gary Hirsh.

As for the Coyotes, Scruggs said the city has done all it could with the latest interested buyer and the decision whether the hockey team stays in Glendale now lies with the National Hockey League. Scruggs went on to explain the importance of keeping the team at the city-owned Jobing.com

Arena, saying it helps pay for the facility and increases visitors for nearby businesses.

Scruggs again asked for residents' input and the resounding response was for the city to buy the team if no new owner is found.

Resident Rosie Miller said the city should ask the publicly owned Green Bay Packers how it's done. For a large part of the meeting, Scruggs focused on the state budget. Bottom line: Revenue is down for a third consecutive year and the state faces an \$825 million budget gap, which Scruggs said would trickle down to impact cities.

Resident Gary Sherwood raised concerns with his water bill, which is higher than his electric bill. The city imposed a 12 percent rate hike in water and sewer services this fiscal year due to rising fixed costs and fewer customers due largely to foreclosures.

Scruggs said she almost fell over when she opened her water bill, which was \$147.

"I hear and feel your frustration," she said. "I am there with you."

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