



By JENNIFER DENEVAN, Needles Desert Star

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# Daniels hire confirmed



**NEEDLES — City Council approved hiring Rick Daniels as the new city manager in a unanimous vote Aug. 13. All members were present.**

**The vote didn't come without questions and concerns from the public. Some of the questions presented to council included, "Why hire a new city manager when one exists?" and "What reasoning could the council have for hiring a new city manager and at such a high cost?" It was also asked what consideration was taken of recent labor negotiations and the fact current city employees are on furloughs and have to pay more into their retirement program.**

**Council Member Linda Kidd said it is a lot of money and it's been a big part of the city's discussion. It's not about being unhappy with Dave Brownlee, the current city manager, she added.**

**She said the council believes they have a better position for Brownlee. He's "excellent in utility managing and that's huge for the city," she continued.**

**Kidd said the city needs expertise in finding money for the city. A coach is needed and while Elaine Cullen, who was hired for a time as an economic development consultant, helped and got things started, more is needed.**

**Council Member Shawn Gudmundson said it was a hard decision for him, also, as he has many friends who are city employees but if something doesn't help move the city forward there won't be a city to call home. Economic development needs to be pushed and the council found a gentleman who can do that, he said. Cleaning and other projects can be done by the city itself, but Daniels has a background to help in ways those who are already in the city can't, he added.**

**Council Member Jim Lopez said the financial situation for the city is to the point where employees who took a five percent pay cut are likely to lose their jobs if something isn't done. The goal is to bring employees back to where they were and to remove the furloughs.**

**Lopez talked about former city manager Richard Rowe, who brought in a significant amount of money, including grant money for Jack Smith Park. Rowe was paid more than residents liked at the time.**

**"If we have to pay someone \$197,000 to make \$2 million and put people back to work, it's an investment," Lopez said.**

**Council Member Tom Darcy mentioned the school district. Declining enrollment is an issue for them, he said, and that's got to be turned around. "We have to increase the want to come here," he said.**

**Daniels also got up to speak. He thanked the council for their unanimous vote. He said it is on his shoulders to turn the city around.**

**After investigating the opportunities in Needles, there's no reason for the city not to turn around, he said. Marketing and promotion are needed.**

**He said he looks forward to working with the city staff and council and doing what can be done as a group, along with the community, to reach success. He and his wife, Joyce, look forward to moving to Needles and being members of the community.**

**"No one will work harder, no one will work more creatively than I to help you realize your expectations," He said. "I thank you for your vote of confidence."**

#### **Contract details**

- Daniels' contract is for a three year term beginning Sept. 16.**
- Beginning salary is \$197,000 per year; which will increase by \$10,000 annually.**
- He is to work at the will and pleasure of the city council, which can terminate him at any time for any reason or no reason upon a majority vote.**
- Upon termination, the council agrees to provide 15 days notice.**
- In lieu of notice, council may release Daniels provided they continue with 12 months salary and continuation of all existing benefits for the lesser of 12 months or until he finds new employment.**
- If cause is cited by the council for termination, Daniels will not receive any severance pay. Causes defined in the agreement include, but are not limited to, acting in bad faith and to the detriment of the city; refusing or failing to act in accordance with any specific direction or order of the council and continuing in poor performance of duties despite council efforts to correct deficiencies.**
- Should Daniels resign, he is expected to give at least a 30 day notice in writing. If he resigns, he won't be entitled to any severance pay.**
- He will receive the same health benefits as any other management employee and the same California Public Employees Retirement System benefits except he will only pay for portions of the 7 percent contribution. He'll pay for 3 percent the first year and 2 percent the second and third years.**

#### **Official city statement**

**NEEDLES — Needles City Council voted in open session at its Aug. 13 meeting to enter into a three year contract with Rick Daniels as city manager.**

**"The council was 100 percent in support of hiring Mr. Daniels. We think he is the perfect fit and we believe he will be an outstanding addition to our city team," said**

**Council Member Linda Kidd in a prepared statement.**

**“Our city has a great deal going for it: recreation on the Colorado River, Route 66, the Historic El Garces Hotel that is being revitalized into a regional multi-modal transportation center, an 18 hole municipal PGA golf course and a vibrant and involved community. With all that we are doing in Needles, we really need someone vibrant and optimistic even when confronted with opposition and we found that in Mr. Daniels,” added Council Member Jim Lopez.**

**Kidd and Lopez worked on the recruitment committee, which considered 13 submissions for the city manager position from throughout California to as far away as Alaska. “Mr. Daniels was very candid and open with us about everything we asked him about and we found his openness and honesty refreshing. We think he is a perfect fit and as to his former city we wish its city council, staff and all of its residents the very best and hope they are successful in the future,” added Lopez.**

**For further information, contact Lopez at 760-559-1302 or Kidd at 760-217-9636.**