



*Written by*

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## Experts following Rick Daniels to Needles

As Desert Hot Springs' current leadership tries to avoid municipal bankruptcy, the economic experts who have previously helped the city are following the former administration to Needles.

The Needles City Council, based on the recommendation of City Manager Rick Daniels, has **endorsed a \$133,000** economic development consulting contract with Development Management Group, a Palm Desert company led by economist Michael Bracken.

Bracken's company worked with Desert Hot Springs for about three-and-a-half years, but he said they decided to end the contract for "business reasons."

Desert Hot Springs was notified on Nov. 6, the day after the election and just a day before city hall would release the explosive news that it was having a financial crisis and needed to start talking about municipal bankruptcy.

Bracken, whose company has contracts with a handful of other cities as well, insisted this shouldn't be seen as leaving Desert Hot Springs in favor of Needles, where Daniels went after leaving Desert Hot Springs in September.

"Our firm had made the decision actually prior to the election that we were going to request termination of our services," said Bracken, adding he was approached by Needles a year ago.

"It's a business decision on our part."

Bracken's company was one of two that responded to Needles' request for proposals. But other familiar names are also popping up in Needles as well.

City documents requested by The Desert Sun show Needles officials are now engaging with Orange-based Urban Futures Inc. and San Francisco-based Stinson Securities, companies that **facilitated bond financing** for Desert Hot Springs during Daniels' tenure.

### **Money race**

Just days after the head of the National Republican Congressional Committee told reporters that Assemblyman Brian Nestande needed to "step up his fundraising," the party stepped in to help.

Nestande, a Palm Desert Republican, on Thursday was added to the first step of the NRCC's "Young Guns" program. The move means Nestande joins 35 other challengers as being "on the radar."

Both the Republicans and the Democrats have fundraising programs to help the candidates in the most competitive seats raise money. However, candidates must show they are meeting key benchmarks in order to keep getting their party's help.

The decision came just days after NRCC Chairman Greg Walden told reporters he wasn't sure what the NRCC's involvement would be in the race for the 36th Congressional seat.

Nestande is trying to unseat Rep. Raul Ruiz, a Palm Desert Democrat who benefited from his party's "Red to Blue" program in the 2012 election.

Ruiz is now a member of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee's "Frontline" program for targeted incumbents.

Federal campaign records show Ruiz raised more than \$1.1 million between Jan. 1 and Sept. 30 and had almost \$876,000 in cash on hand. Nestande raised \$221,731 and had \$150,585 in the bank.

### **In the spotlight**

Rancho Mirage City Councilman Scott Hines, a U.S. Air Force Academy graduate, appeared on MSNBC's Rachel Maddow Show on Thursday night and revealed an "ex-gay" therapist employed by the academy while he was a cadet was a sexual predator and that Hines was among his prey.

Hines' appearance on Maddow's show was precipitated by the recent revelation that Dr. Michael Rosebush, who heads the academy's Center for Character and Leadership Development, is a conversion therapy practitioner. Simply put, he tries to help gay men turn straight.

Rosebush, who was hired by the academy in 2009, served as vice president of Colorado Springs-based Focus on the Family, widely described as an anti-gay Christian organization.

Hines, who was shocked at the news, said his own experience with a conversion therapist was destructive.

“When I heard this week that a reparative therapist is heading these programs and put right in the middle of this ... given my experiences and what I suspect are probably the experiences of these young cadets, it was just horrifying,” Hines said.

Hines missed Thursday’s council meeting for the television appearance. The television show covered the cost of the airfare and hotel stay in New York City, he added.

### **Overheard**

Democrat Philip Drucker, a law school professor from La Quinta, has started a Facebook page to tout his campaign for the 28th state Senate seat.

The platform includes revitalizing the economy, particularly through the renewable energy opportunities, and addressing the dying Salton Sea.

Perhaps Drucker was inspired by his recent visit there.

“I went with a bunch of friends (who just happen to be engineers) in an effort to better understand the issues and help find a solution (or two),” Drucker wrote in a Nov. 12 post. “Fortunately, persons smarter than me are already working on a plan because I can tell you this, having now experienced the deterioration for myself, we need to act and we need to act now!”

### **Recent endorsements**

- In his bid to unseat an emergency room physician, Nestande scored the endorsement of the California Association of Physician Groups.

The group describes itself as the nation’s largest trade association representing physician organizations.

- Republican Bonnie Garcia, a former Assemblywoman running for state Senate, has been endorsed by the California Small Business Association.

### **Weekly political calendar**

- Reservations must be made by Friday for the Desert Hot Springs Republican Women’s Club’s Christmas luncheon. It will be held Dec. 4 at the Miracle Springs Resort and Spa in Desert Hot

Springs. The club will collect gifts for Hacienda Valdez, a treatment center for women suffering from substance abuse. Tickets are \$15.

Reservations: (760) 288-4831

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