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San Tan Valley library options limited

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Pinal Supervisor Martyn tells residents county unlikely to fund permanent facility, steers them toward bookmobile

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SAN TAN VALLEY — Bryan Martyn, District 2 Pinal County supervisor, was surprised that he didn't get any questions about incorporating San Tan Valley at a public forum on Oct. 14 at Poston Butte High School.

A new library, however, was a different matter.

"We want to get this library up and running as soon as possible," Martyn said, adding that the library would be near Fry's on Hunt Highway next to the Rural/Metro Fire Department station.

"Everybody in Pinal County pays a library tax," Martyn said. "That library tax goes toward every library throughout the county. There is no Pinal County library, unlike Maricopa County, which built the building, paid the rent and serves the whole community.

"Pinal County is not in that business yet. Will we be someday? As long as the economy is where it's at, I don't know if that's the best course of action."

Martyn said the San Tan Valley community pays \$250,000 a year in taxes for library services, adding that there is no opening date set for a new library.

"Our near-term option involves the Johnson Utilities facility," Martyn said. "There are some impact fee issues there — my understanding from our attorneys is that the impact fees were not waivable. I think most people will appreciate the fact that a wealthy developer cannot come in and talk a supervisor into waiving his impact fees — in this case, about \$21,000.

"For a developer, \$21,000 is generally a cheap date. But that's still \$21,000 and it's their money."

Martyn said the community's options right now for library services are to drive to Apache Junction, go online, pay \$50 a year to use the library at Queen Creek or look into getting a bookmobile. "I think this community has demonstrated it wants a library it doesn't want to pay for, or drive to.

"A bookmobile costs about \$500,000," he said. "That bookmobile would service areas not serviced by a municipal library. At 80,000 people, you're it. You are the vast majority of people that bookmobile would service. It would be in this community about four or five days a week.

"That option is \$500,000 up front and about \$125,000 to \$150,000 a year to maintain. That's within our budget."

Another library option, Martyn said, was to open an existing structure, partner with a nonprofit organization and start a library.

"They could work with the county to utilize our funds and bring you up to Pinal County standards," Martyn said. "That option is on the table right now, and I think it's wise to explore all of the options to use your \$250,000."

On the subject of having a Plan B for incorporating San Tan Valley, Martyn said, "Right now, the League of Cities and Towns and city managers are working together to come up with a change in legislation that would minimize the fiscal impact on neighboring communities.

"I don't think there's any doubt that many of the San Tan Valley citizens at least felt they were ready for a vote. Whether they're ready for incorporation or not is up to them," he continued. "The hard part with the neighboring principalities was loss of revenue. We're trying to find a way to minimize that fiscal impact.

Martyn's hope is that the San Tan Valley community will have an opportunity to vote. "Whether we incorporate is really neither here nor there. But they should have the ability to vote on it. We'll see where that goes."

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