

CABAZON: Civic center project completed with dedication



GAIL WESSON/STAFF PHOTO

(Above) Fifth District Riverside County Supervisor Marion Ashley speaks at the dedication of the Cabazon County Water District headquarters on Thursday, Jan. 9.

(Below) R.D. Cash, former Cabazon County Water District board member and president.

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Published: January 09, 2014; 05:46 PM

The last public building in the Cabazon civic center complex was dedicated Thursday, Jan. 9, completing a project financed with almost \$16 million in Riverside County redevelopment money.

“This is the last piece of the civic center puzzle,” 5th District County Supervisor Marion Ashley said before a ceremony outside the \$1.2 million building that houses the Cabazon County Water District on Broadway Street.

He alluded to uncertainties last year when the county had to prove to the state that the project was under contract and in progress after redevelopment agencies were dissolved by the state in 2011.

The water district, which had offices on Main Street, moved into the new 3,345-square-foot building last month. The old office would fit inside the new building’s community meeting room.

The district pays a nominal rent for now, but Ashley expects a land swap deal will be finalized this year. The county will trade the new building for the district’s former office site, which is between the county’s fleet maintenance facility and a sheriff’s station.

The water district joins a library, community center and gymnasium, child care center, fire station, park and skate park in the civic center.

“The future is extremely bright for Cabazon, Banning and areas to the east,” Ashley said during the ceremony. “This is going to help set the stage for the future” between services available at the James A. Venable Civic Center complex and new \$100 million commercial expansion at the Desert Hills Premium Outlets expansion across Interstate 10.

County supervisors voted last month to set aside 25 percent of sales taxes generated from new outlet stores to pay for increased sheriff’s patrols by the outlets and make road improvements to keep traffic flowing nearby.

Ashley said the extra patrols will start when the stores open, which is expected in April.

The next step to foster development will be for the water district, county and Morongo Band of Mission Indians to work together on a \$3 million sewage treatment plant.

“We have a plan. We have to have money to build it,” Ashley said.

Former water board president R.D. Cash, who did not seek reelection in November, shared with the audience how his relatives ran the 800-square-foot fruit stand that became the district office.

“I’m sure some of you remember the good old days, when you would stand outside the walk-up window we had at our old headquarters; you know paying your bills in good weather and bad,” he joked.

Now customers do business in a building with the latest in energy-saving features.

District Manager Calvin Louie said he kept a 6-year-old framed photo of Ashley taken when the supervisor promised the county would work with the district on a building project -- a promise now fulfilled.

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