

## **Rep. Noel Campbell plans to push for regional park in Granite Dells**

Fann, Pierce also attend work study session with Prescott Valley Town Council

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Originally Published: December 25, 2019 6 p.m.

<https://www.dcourier.com/news/2019/dec/25/prescott-valley-town-council-hears-state-legislato/>

Arizona Senate President Karen Fann and state Reps. Steve Pierce and Noel Campbell told the Prescott Valley Town Council on Dec. 19 that they're doing their best to keep the 2020 legislative budget session short, which should help municipalities finalize their budgets.

During a work study session at Prescott Valley Public Library's Auditorium, Campbell added that he's focused on helping the state obtain more money for highway improvements, assisting small claimants in court regarding water rights, and pushing for a regional park in the Granite Dells in Prescott.

Campbell, who won't be seeking re-election after serving six years as a state rep, invoked the name of President Teddy Roosevelt, a staunch proponent of National Parks during the early 1900s, in his remarks to council.

"We need a regional park to save, protect and enhance what's already out there," said Campbell, referring to preventing the Dells from being overdeveloped. "It's a beautiful area that needs to be preserved, and we're working on it."

Campbell argued that a "regional park would be an economic magnet."

"If we don't take the opportunity, we'll lose it," said Campbell, referring to protecting the Dells from too many homes and hotels. "It won't be a wildlife corridor for us."

Pierce said the Dells will eventually undergo "an evolution" in which private property owners and state and local government officials can work together to preserve the magnificent, unique rock formations on both sides of North Highway 89 in Prescott.

Regarding the forthcoming state legislative session, Fann said 2020 is "going to be ugly politically" and that she wants to "get in and get out fast." She added that she's been working on the state budget four months ahead of schedule.

"We hope to be done with the state budget by March," Fann said. "Economically, we're doing absolutely amazing. We have more jobs than people to fill jobs."

Pierce agreed with Fann, adding, "get in, get out and go home."

Fann added that she's pushing to acquire additional raises for Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS) and Arizona Department of Corrections employees.

She's also concerned about the homeless population in Arizona. Fann said the current problem isn't with the mentally ill or with drug addicts. Rather, it's seniors who've retired and who are on Social Security and can't afford high rental prices on apartments or homes.

"We've got to stay one step ahead of the homeless issue," said Fann, adding that the state needs to invest the money it has now to solve the crisis. "In the short-term, we need to help them get off the streets, and the long-term solution is to keep them going. ... Every municipality has to be a part of this."

During the study session, each Prescott Valley councilmember had the opportunity to ask Fann, Pierce and Campbell questions.

Prescott Valley Councilmember Lori Hunt commented on the town's latest General Plan, approved by residents, which "calls for managed growth." She wondered if there were a way to reduce the amount of time it takes for PV to complete applications for state-land purchases, which would help Prescott Valley expand its roads system, among other things.

"Prescott Valley's on the cusp of some changes with regard to growth and new business," she added.

Fann said she's working with PV Vice Mayor Lora Lee Nye, Campbell and Pierce to address the state lands issue.